At Tom’s Do-it Center in Portland, Michigan, being a successful full service retailer means more than just providing customers with the products they’re looking for in a timely manner. For this 10,000 square foot hardware store, located inside a 60,000 square foot supermarket, success is measured by the total customer experience. With the paint department proving itself year after year as one of the Do-it Center’s busiest areas, the need to upgrade to a paint dispenser that could quickly fulfill customers exact color requests, offer better consistency, and keep up with an annual volume of nearly 3,000 gallons of paint sold was clear.

“Making the change from manual processes to automation was absolutely necessary in order for us to effectively serve our customers,” said Dave Antaya, hardware manager for Tom’s Do-it Center. “We had been looking at purchasing an automated dispenser for quite some time, but always found that the price was too high to replace our manual machine.”

The path to automation
It wasn’t until Fluid Management approached the store to beta test its new AT1500 automatic paint dispenser that the possibility of automation became a reality. With its accurate and quick dispensing system, proprietary DVX technology, and advanced ColorPro software Fluid Management’s AT1500 delivered the accuracy and reliability Tom’s Do-it Center was seeking at a price that was affordable.

“Along with affordability, ease of use was also a requirement. All of our employees are expected to be cross-trained, so it was of high importance that any new equipment be easy to learn,” said Antaya. “We were extremely pleased to find that the AT1500 streamlined our processes with the ability to simply enter the paint formula into the computer, allowing us to let the machine do the work.

“We were happy to find that once the paint formula was keyed in, the machine intuitively knew when to stop—a big contrast to our other equipment which required manual tinting,” noted Antaya. “We knew the AT1500 would make a big difference in our efficiency, but we held on to our old manual equipment just in case it was needed. We haven’t used the manual since the AT1500 arrived.”

Making the transition to automation has been fairly seamless for the Do-it Center, with employees especially taking notice of how Fluid Management’s technology simplifies tasks since the formula book is built right into the machine.

“We were impressed with how the software prompted employees to ask customers the right questions while filling their paint order,” said Antaya. “The AT1500 is very straight-forward, any member of our staff is able to operate the machine because it provides step-by-step instructions. The fact that our employees can enter a formula into the dispenser and then turn their back on the machine while it fills the order and actually talk to the customer has been a major benefit for us.”

Doing it best
“The AT1500 has changed our entire operation,” expressed Antaya. “Coupled with being easy to operate, it is also very easy to maintain. Every morning we purge the system to ensure no dry paint is in the lines and evaluate how much paint is in the canisters. Additionally, we’ve also been very impressed with the responsiveness of Fluid Management if we have any questions. All in all, moving to an automated system allows us to be true to our name ‘Do-It Best’. This has been an extremely smart business decision for us.”

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