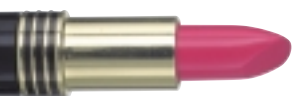


At Yves Saint Laurent perfection begins with weighing



The YVES SAINT LAURENT plant in Lassigny, France, has a staff of 800 and three main activities: alcohol (perfume and toilet waters), body-care products and toiletries (gels, lotions, creams, etc.) and beauty products (coloured emulsions, lipsticks, make-up powders, etc.). Each of these units uses weighing for the same purpose - to enhance quality and productivity. The YVES SAINT LAURENT production plant, which has been awarded a prize for its architecture, is also the distribution centre for European countries.

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the magazine

Christophe Audibert

the Production Manager for the body-care and beauty products units, explained the importance of reliable weighing in an industry where the raw materials are costly and where each operator must be completely independent.

Precision - the cornerstone of manufacture

“When I came to manufacturing, five years ago, the factory was already equipped with METTLER TOLEDO products. My first concern was to verify the precision of the balances, as it is pointless considering any quality control procedures if, to start with, the weighing is not absolutely reliable.

I must admit that I was impressed. I experimented by weighing a pen on a 60 kg and then on a 120 kg platform and the weight was exact to the nearest gram, indeed the nearest half-gram. I did not think that that was possible.”

One operator, one terminal, one box

The beauty and body care units have their hands full, with nearly 500 formula references to make up. This is very demanding as production is conducted in small batches. To help them, they have computer data sheets indicating the raw material codes, their position in the stock hall, the quantities to be weighed and the quantities to be returned to stock. After they have been to collect the raw materials, the operators carry out the weighing operation in a preparation room known as ‘the box’. Mr Audibert stresses the importance of having a single scale for all types of weighing.

This is what convinced the company to opt for METTLER TOLEDO. All weighings of a single material are carried out in one box, which makes for an obvious space saving. Indeed METTLER TOLEDO scales, equipped with MultiRange technology, automatically recognize the degree of precision according to the weight dispensed. It is therefore possible to weigh both heavy and light items without changing equipment. The only action needed is the press of a button to select the precision range at any time during the weighing process.

After weighing, the printer generates two labels indicating the material codes, the bulk production order number, the material reception docket number, the losses, the net weight, the gross weight and the name of the operator.

One of these labels accompanies the production file and the second is attached to the container. When all of the weighing operations for a given formula have been completed, stock withdrawals are then confirmed in the computer-assisted stock control system. The preparation is then ready to move on to the manufacturing stage.

Stock management to the nearest gram

If you consider that there are 5000 component references, 600 material references as well as a constant flow of goods in and out, stock keeping at YVES SAINT LAURENT takes some very careful management. For this reason, the factory is also equipped with a 1500 kg pit scale at material and component reception. MultiRange barcode counting scales are located in the stores and on the production lines to keep a close check on returns to stock.

Hygiene is a top priority

As the photos show, hygiene is a priority for YVES SAINT LAURENT, which appreciates the design and especially the robustness of the all stainless-steel scales. As they are fully sealed (index IP 67), they are easy to clean and maintain.

In the alcohol unit, Frederic Cornet, the Workshop Manager, showed us the six product lines on which Kouros, Opium and other well-known French perfumes are produced. Each of these lines is linked to an SQC statistical control unit, all of which are run by FreeWeigh, an exclusive METTLER TOLEDO software package which makes centralised control of the filling and production processes possible.

First step - weighing the chaix*

The drums delivered by suppliers are systematically weighed on 1500kg pit scales before being blended with the chaix. Here, the 'heart' of the perfume is blended with additives to produce the final fragrance before it matures in tanks and then goes on to the bottling plant.

Respecting the law and preserving the quality of the product

As with all companies regulated by the Packaged Goods Act, YVES SAINT LAURENT has to comply with the nominal weight regulations. That is why the Alcohol Unit decided to use METTLER TOLEDO solutions to handle its filling quantities.

"Not only must we respect the law, but the special nature of our products requires that that we keep overfill to a minimum, so that we leave sufficient space between the neck of the bottle

and the fill level of the contents. This is necessary to preserve the quality and packaging of the product. Then, because in our business every millilitre counts, wastage must be kept to a minimum. For all of these reasons, the operators conduct regular weighing checks in accordance with the procedures displayed next to the SQC unit. If there is a tolerance violation (T.V.), they follow the instructions as indicated.



When a batch has been completed, they print out a summary of all the relevant data. This list is attached to each production order and a duplicate is filed as required by the regulations," explained Mr Cornet.

The arrival of FreeWeigh on the production lines

"For us, FreeWeigh means automated data output. The user-friendliness of this program allows our operators to format the analysis tables as they wish. Where previously, for example, we would print out five labels, today we obtain an overall document that warns us in the case of a T.V. So the information feedback to the balances is of great help to us," he added □

Reducing overfill

"With the results generated by FreeWeigh, we have been able to make our machines more reliable. We now issue monthly, quarterly or annual

statistics on a single perfume and reference. This information allows us to feed exact filling coefficients into the computer systems with a very positive effect. It gives us greater reliability of perfume stocks because of a reduction in the deviation between true filling quantities and the quantities calculated by our systems. FreeWeigh also enables us to keep a running inventory, instead of drawing it up just once a year. If we notice that a perfume is deviating from the norm, we can call up statistics for a given period and see whether we might, for example, have overfilled. The origin of the discrepancy is immediately identified and rectified by adjusting our filling coefficient."

* bulk solvent