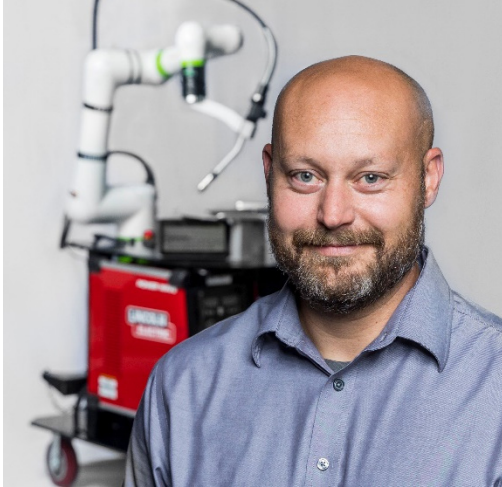


Central McGowan Automation –Driven by Nearly 75 Years of Serving the Manufacturing Industry with Excellence and Ingenuity

Pete Rogers, VP & General Manager of Central McGowan's Automation Division, talks about its growing automation and robotics division and the manufacturing experience and focus that fuel it.



Q: What is Central McGowan?

Central McGowan's origins go back to 1947. We are a supplier of gases, equipment and supplies for the manufacturing, welding, medical, and food and beverage industries in the upper Midwest. We added automation to our offering in 2015, and are an authorized systems integrator for FANUC and Lincoln Electric Automation.

Our mission is to help customers meet their production goals by delivering high-quality automation and robotic systems and service, and being a trusted advisor for the future of manufacturing.

Q: Where are you located? What areas do you serve?

Central McGowan's dedicated automation center is located in a 12,000-square-foot facility in St. Cloud, MN, with really no boundaries for our

service area. We have a skilled staff of project managers, engineers, programmers and service techs. Currently, we have projects throughout the Midwest, coast to coast, Texas, and internationally. New technologies eliminate any geographic barriers.

Q: What certifications do you have?

We are authorized system integrators for FANUC and Lincoln Electric Automation.

Q: What type(s) of automation services do you provide?

We've completed many successful custom solutions—projects that have taken us into new industries and territories. Our bread-and-butter projects include robotic welding, plasma cutting, machine tending, material handling, palletizing, assembling and packaging applications. We design, manufacture, install, program, train and maintain an automation package that's tailored to a customer's specific needs and goals. We also provide after-market parts and service.

We're really excited about our newest offering—a CRX FAB-PAK Cobot Welding Package that combines the latest in technologies from FANUC and Lincoln Electric Automation to create a highly reliable, super portable welding system that's extremely easy to set up, install and program.

Q: What sets you apart?

Central McGowan's point-of-difference is three-fold and includes: 1) Our distribution leadership, knowledge and expertise. We have on-staff specialists in robotic applications, gas, equipment, safety, abrasives, cutting systems and more. 2) Our frequent, multiple customer touchpoints including account managers, route sales reps, service techs; and customer-first focus. 3) Our ability to seamlessly integrate robotic solutions into customer operations.

Q: How do you calculate the ROI of automation?

Calculating ROI is a pretty straightforward formula. It's important to consider both the direct and indirect paybacks. There are direct labor savings by moving labor off a process or shifting from a higher paid to lower paid employee. There are also direct productivity gains. For example, we had a customer that averaged 60 panels per shift assembling by hand, the system installed with one robot assembling doubled the output to 120 panels per shift. Some of the less direct paybacks include reduced safety costs due to less need for PPE (personal protective equipment) and fewer work compensation claims, as well as cost-savings related to scrap, rework and customer rejection.

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Q: What areas of improvement do you focus on?

We seek to reduce cycle times, human error, rework, repetitive tasks and labor issues/shortages; and boost quality, inspection capability, ergonomics, safety, flexibility and value-added processes. More specifically, we see improved part consistency for less rework and better part/piece quality; fewer gaps due to labor shortages; improved safety due to the elimination or near-elimination of dangerous/repetitive/high-risk tasks for workers; improved productivity and increased throughput by extending the day and running lights out; optimized part flow by reducing frequency of touches and fork truck traffic; and floor-space savings. Every project starts with what our customer needs and develops from there.

Q: Where is the automation and robotics industry going? Automation is how the U.S. competes with lower labor costs in other countries. It has become a strategic imperative for U.S. manufacturers—from helping alleviate labor challenges to improving efficiency to reshoring.

Q: How is automation changing the workforce?

Due to the impact of automation and robotics, the World Economic Forum expects 85 million jobs to be disrupted by 2025, while 97 million jobs will be created. What I and others predict we'll see is:

- A reskilling of the workforce as workers are moved into higher-value roles. This will require investment and continued advancement in automation capabilities to free up laborers and maintain competitiveness.
- More collaborative robots, or cobots, running side-by-side workers. As cobots continue to get faster, easier to program, more reliable, affordable and adaptable, they will become a more widespread and practical solution for all sizes of manufacturers.
- Improved worker safety and manufacturing productivity. With automated processes, the more physically demanding and dangerous jobs can be eliminated, allowing manufacturers to protect workers while meeting demand safely and sustainably.
- The right-shoring of manufacturing. Right-shoring refers to locating manufacturing operations in areas and countries that offer the best combination of cost and efficiency. More and more companies are bringing manufacturing closer to home and back to the U.S. as the advantages of offshoring erode. In a recent survey by KEARNEY*, 52 percent of companies surveyed said they increased the manufacturing and sourcing of products from the U.S. And U.S. manufacturing executives said they intend to reshore at least some manufacturing operations over the next three years.

Q: Where can I learn more about Central McGowan's Automation capabilities?

For more information, visit www.CentralMcGowan.com, contact Automation@CentralMcGowan.com, or call 320-257-4800/800-569-1322, OPTION #5, and ask to speak to one of the company's automation project specialists or sales engineers.

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*Kearney is a leading global management consulting firm with more than 3,600 people working in more than 40 countries. It works with more than three-quarters of the Fortune Global 500, as well as with the most influential governmental and non-profit organizations.

About Central McGowan

Central McGowan is a third-generation, family-owned, diversified company founded in 1965 with the merger of McGowan Welding Supply of Little Falls (founded in 1947) and Central Welding Supply of St. Cloud. Its dynamic business model includes three integrated businesses: a FANUC- & Lincoln Electric Automation-authorized integration division; a leading industrial, welding and medical gas & supply business; and a CO2 Solutions division that supplies beverage carbonation, industrial CO2 and dry ice solutions. Serving 20+ industries with customers spanning most of Minnesota and Iowa, and areas of North Dakota, South Dakota & Wisconsin; and automation implementations across the U.S. and internationally, it has fully stocked retail stores in St. Cloud, Little Falls, Mankato (Preferred Welder Sales), and Minneapolis (Metro Welding Supply), Minn. and Fargo, N.D.; more than 70 Minnesota dealers; and CO2 distribution locations in St. Cloud and St. Paul, Minn. and Des Moines, Iowa (Fessler Carbonic Gas). It believes quality and integrity are the keys to success, as is always putting customers first. Its promise of "WE WORK FOR YOU," means it strives to make life work better for its customers. Visit online at WWW.CENTRALMCGOWAN.COM, on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

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