

EDGERS

Professionalism is the key to success

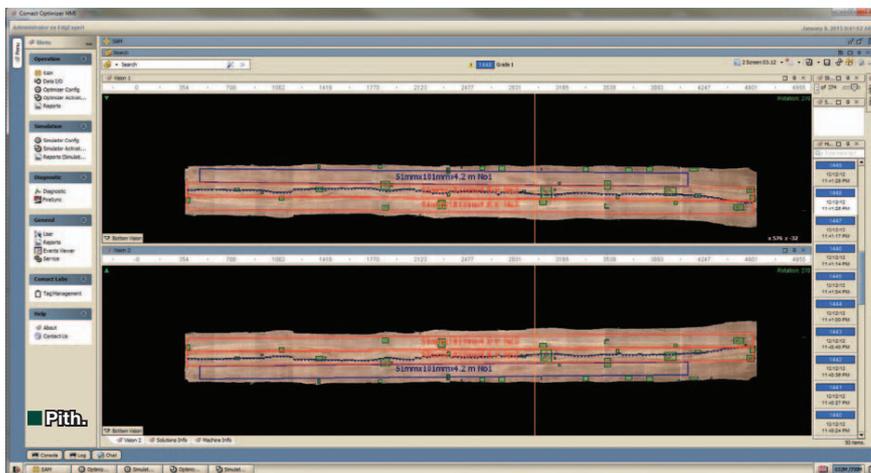
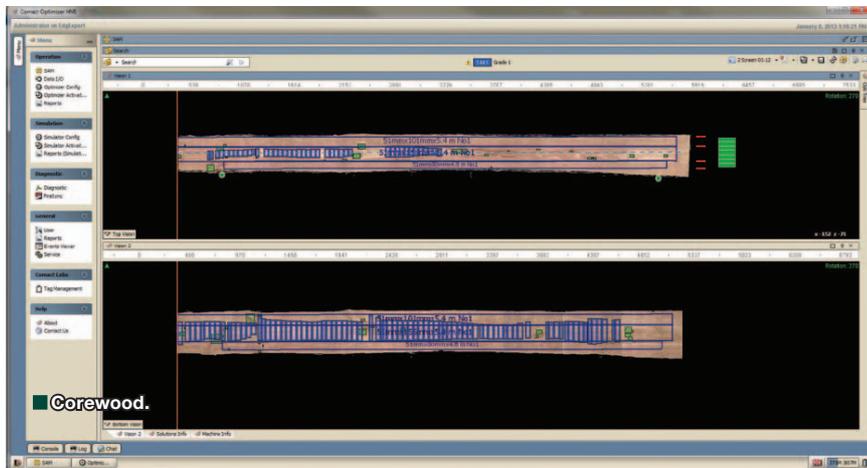
THEY MAY be a half a world apart but New Zealand-based Red Stag Timbers and the North American sawmill equipment manufacturer Comact have something in common ... they're both highly professional.

It was this trait that led Red Stag on the path to growth and which led the NZ firm on a mission to find the best and the latest technology to facilitate this continued growth. Comact was the preferred supplier and commissioner of a whole new operating procedure for Red Stag.

Red Stag Sawmill Manager Steve Roberts explains: "We looked at three systems, two seriously, but the main reason we went with Comact was because of the volume of systems they had built, plus they had a better understanding of what we required

that can replace human intervention in any part of a sawmill site process. Systems have been developed for many different species, spruce, pine, fir, hemlock, southern yellow pine, cedar, hardwood and more recently for radiata pine.

Indeed, last year, Comact installed its first vision system in New Zealand into the Red Stag sawmill. A complete upgrade on an existing optimized 5-saws board edger has been done. Comact replaced the existing transverse 3D scanner with a new EdgExpert equipped with vision sensors. The EdgExpert and the other Comact's systems are combining an accurate transverse geometrical scanner with 3D profiles of the boards every 3mm and high definition color images of the boards. The quality of the scanning device is



will have proven ability of this specie and be ready to accept challenges in Australia and New Zealand with other species in order to optimize value. Hardwood mills as well as softwood are candidates for very attractive returns on this investment.

"It's lived up to all expectations ... absolutely ... even though we're still learning how to run it properly. They're a very professional crowd," said Steve.

The timeframe from decision to commissioning was about six months. "Some of the tricky stuff we wanted to do with some of the vision scanning took a bit longer -- probably took about three or four months to settle in," Steve said.

"They had never tried to do some of the stuff that we wanted before. We got core detection and things like that so we cut around the core on the edger.

arrived. I've had some with some other suppliers and the gear arrives and it's not really what I thought I was going to get," said Steve.

"We're very, very happy with Comact their people and their service. These guys are dedicated."

And the difference to the bottom line ... "It certainly pays off. That's why we have put another two in. We're installing two more right at this moment as we speak.

"We expect to get even better. Once we learn how to run it the way we want we can expect even better results.

"We're putting the third system in now; one on a board edger, one on a trimmer. We are getting Comact to redo our controls on the bin sorter; that ties in nicely with the optimization package rather than mix and match."

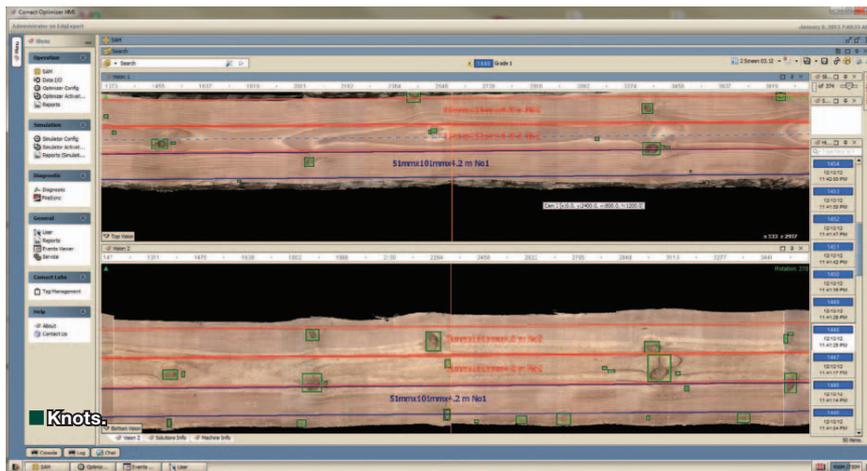
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especially with radiata pine. It was a balance of the experience they had and the price, obviously. There are other systems out there but they are pretty hard to stack up financially."

Comact has been involved in the sawmill industry since the beginning of last century and specializes in providing sawmill processes solutions all over the world. Since 2005, the company has made a huge step in vision technology by introducing the first GradExpert, an automated system for grading dressed boards in North America. Since then, Comact has designed different solutions not only for dry mills but also for sawmills (green mills) with its expertise in defects detection on boards, logs, and cants surfaces. Now, with more than a hundred vision systems installed in North America, Comact is definitely the leader in development of systems

really important but more crucial is the software algorithm to make the proper defect identification.

This is where Comact expertise makes the difference. For Red Stag, defects and/or characteristics that were important to identify were knots, corewood, pith and growth rate. Once we have the proper identification, size and location of each defect/characteristic then the optimization can process thousands of opportunities for positioning the defects in the products in order to get the maximum value of the input board once it's been edged. Sometimes the solution is to remove a damaging defect by edging or trimming it but the more lucrative solution is to locate the defect within the product such that it does not result in a downgrade. Higher recovery and higher value are the result.



The success of this first experience with Red Stag resulted in the sales of two other systems for other applications in the sawmill and in the dry mill. The sawmill TrimExpert will be used as an improved trimmer optimizer and with the same vision technology as the edger optimizer in order to full maximize value. The second system, the GradExpert, will be installed in the dry mill in order to grade dry boards coming out of the planer mill.

Once these two new systems are fully operational, the Comact team

Our blonded knots on radiata caused a bit of grief because they hadn't come across it before. Not grief, maybe, but it was a bit more difficult to handle."

Red Stag sent two of its employees to Canada for three weeks to "learn the ropes". "The system is quite complex to run; it's not something you don't put any time into to get the best out of it, as with any new technology.

"The system's good; it's really good! The installation was really professional. Their technicians are really, really professional and there were no nasty surprises when the gear

'large sawmill' is somewhat of an understatement as this year it will be cutting about 400,000 cubic metres of timber.

And for the final word from Steve ... "Overall it's been a good investment (about \$9million in total) for us. When we started the first one it was more or less an experiment to try and get some value adding on the edger but also to see where the new technology was going. It's certainly paying off.

"They're (Comact) a very professional outfit and easy to deal with."