**User Report**

**A Barrel of Colors - Ergonomics Meets Colorfulness**

Protection, decoration, function - coatings protect surfaces, influence their appearance and give them certain properties. FreiLacke is a specialist in colored coatings and relies on the ergonomically designed lifting aids from Schmalz for handling its shipping containers. Thanks to the individual configuration, they are perfectly suited to the task at hand.

A Great Place to Work 2023 and therefore one of the best employers in Baden-Wuerttemberg: Emil Frei GmbH & Co. KG, brand name FreiLacke, was able to impress both its employees and the competition jury. "One of the reasons is certainly that we attach great importance to ergonomic workplaces," says Dr. Rainer Frei, Managing Director and Commercial Director. "Our staff are the guarantors of our great success and we support them. Of course, this includes reducing physical strain wherever possible." Specifically, for example, at the packing stations. Several hundred parcels weighing 25 kilograms each and heavy barrels have to be moved here every day. "That adds up to several tons per shift," emphasizes Oliver Zanner, Head of Marketing at FreiLacke. The solution: vacuum lifting devices from Schmalz. The operation also uses many of the lifting devices for handling raw materials and in the production areas.

Founded in 1926, the family-owned company FreiLacke produces custom-made colors and coatings for customers in the vehicle, machine and apparatus construction, contract coating, functional furniture, storage technology, construction and sanitary sectors, as well as for rail vehicles and the wind energy industry. This includes liquid coatings as well as powder and electrophoretic coatings and composites solutions. In 2023, more than 650 employees generated annual sales of around 180 million euros at the Bräunlingen-Döggingen location in the southern Black Forest. The system coating specialist's products are sold to industrial customers worldwide.

**Individually planned**

FreiLacke has been benefiting from the excellent ergonomics of the vacuum lifters and crane systems from Schmalz since 2010. The solutions from Schmalz greatly reduce the load for personnel when lifting. This supports the back and musculoskeletal system. This is confirmed by the independent association Aktion Gesunder Rücken e. V. (AGR) with its seal of approval.

"Thanks to the VacuMaster, we can also pick our industrial coatings ergonomically in 200-liter barrels," emphasizes Oliver Zanner. The VM-Basic-270-1 vacuum lifting device enables effortless and health-friendly handling of even very heavy workpieces. Without this lifting device, barrels weighing at least 250 kilograms would not have been an option as transport containers. "We use a completely customized solution that Schmalz designed for us." The modular design made this possible. FreiLacke received the lifting aid that was exactly right for the application thanks to the selection of different basic modules, operator handles, load beams and suction plates.

The vacuum generator is located in the basic module and provides the necessary suction force to the lifting device, which transfers it to the workpiece via the suction plates. The aluminum load beam also serves as a vacuum reservoir. The system works on an overhead crane, which allows for a large reach, and a chain hoist takes over the lifting force. This allows the skilled workers to effortlessly place the heavy barrels, which come from the storage area by forklift, on the Euro plates ready for dispatch.

**Almost like riding a motorcycle**

FreiLacke uses several JumboErgo-65s for handling smaller shrink wrapped goods. These vacuum tube lifters move the 25-kilogram shipping cartons for powder coatings just as sensitively and precisely as the buckets - filled with twelve kilograms of liquid coatings and without straining the skilled workers. "This has allowed us to minimize work-related musculoskeletal disorders among our pickers," says Oliver Zanner happily. A colleague from the shipping department, who works with the Schmalz devices on a daily basis, adds that one detail is convincing: "Before we used the Schmalz solution, we had a few mishaps because the adhesive tape on the cardboard boxes failed or buckets were not closed properly," he recalls. "The suction cups keep boxes and cans safe during movement and place them exactly where they are needed." Using the twist grip, employees lift, lower and release the load without effort. "It's as easy to operate as accelerating a motorcycle, and it's fun," he says.

Depending on the handling task, the specialists use the appropriate end effector, which they can change in a few simple steps thanks to the quick-change adapter: The round vacuum gripper RG moves the paint buckets, and the double suction cup DG and the four head suction cup VG pick up large cardboard boxes safely. Both solutions are adjustable and can therefore be adapted to any workpiece. Large stacking heights are no problem thanks to the movable operator handle.

Maximum reach is also ensured here by jib cranes, on which the tube lifters are moved horizontally along the ceiling for several meters. Thanks to the large swivel angle of 180 degrees, the lifting aids can even reach areas that are difficult to access. The cranes are designed for loads up to 65 kilograms and are responsive thanks to their aluminum construction. Another advantage: thanks to the large swivel angle, only one JumboFlex is required for two packing stations.

**Optimal solution for every task**

FreiLacke also uses several JumboFlex-35 vacuum tube lifters, which the skilled workers can operate intuitively with one hand, allowing them to move workpieces weighing up to 35 kilograms over long periods of time without tiring. The suction cups on this model can also be exchanged using the quick-change system and adapted to different loads.

FreiLacke logistics manager Frank Januschowski appreciates the uncomplicated cooperation with Schmalz. He regularly visits trade shows such as LogiMAT with colleagues to find out about new products. Together with the vacuum experts, he considers how the ergonomics in the company can be further improved. "In discussions with the sales department, it became clear that a solution planned individually for us would deliver the best result with the VacuMaster - and that's exactly what happened. It is only thanks to the lifting aid that we are able to handle the heavy barrels without straining our employees. "That's great," he sums up, and another thing is convincing: "We've been using some of the lifting aids for many years. If our requirements change, Schmalz takes care of the conversion. This means we always work with the best possible equipment."

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**Service for the editorial team**

**Meta-Title:** Lifting aids from Schmalz support order picking at a paint manufacturer

**Meta-Description:** FreiLacke specialises in system coating solutions and relies on ergonomic lifting aids from Schmalz for handling shipping containers.

**Social Media:** FreiLacke relies on high-quality solutions – not only for its products, but also for handling them in everyday operations. Thanks to Schmalz's ergonomic lifting aids, handling shipping containers has become child's play. The customised solutions ensure that every work step is carried out efficiently and in a back-friendly manner.

**Images:**

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|  |  | **Image 1:**  With the VacuMaster, skilled workers can move even heavy 200-litre drums with ease. |
|  |  | **Image 2:**  Schmalz customised the base module, control element, load crossbars and suction plates of the VacuMaster for use at FreiLacke. |
|  |  | **Image 3:**  Thanks to the movable control bar on the JumboErgo-65, employees can reach high stacking heights. |
|  |  | **Image 4:**  The DG double suction gripper on the JumboErgo holds the packages securely in place. |
|  |  | **Image 5:**  Overhead cranes provide the necessary reach for lifting aids. |
|  |  | **Image 6:**  The JumboErgo-65 can be flexibly used wherever it is needed on the swivelling overhead crane. |

Images: J. Schmalz GmbH

**About the company**

Schmalz is one of the market leaders in vacuum automation and ergonomic handling systems. The internationally positioned company's products are used in logistics applications as well as in the automotive industry, the electronics sector and furniture production. The broad spectrum in the vacuum automation business field includes individual components such as suction cups or vacuum generators, complete gripping systems and clamping solutions for holding workpieces, for example on CNC machining centres. In the Handling division, Schmalz offers innovative handling solutions for industry and trade with vacuum lifters and crane systems. With the Energy Storage business unit, the company is establishing a further mainstay in the field of stationary energy storage systems.

The combination of comprehensive advice, a strong focus on innovation and first-class quality ensures sustainable added value for customers. Intelligent solutions from Schmalz make production and logistics processes more flexible and efficient - and at the same time fit for advancing digitalisation.

Schmalz is represented in all major markets with its own locations and trading partners in around 70 countries. The family-owned company, headquartered in Glatten in the Black Forest, employs around 1,800 people at 31 locations worldwide.

**Contect for Questions**

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