

19 September 2018

Press Release

ASSA ABLOY unlocks automation with over R10 million investment

Global leader in door opening solutions, ASSA ABLOY, has tapped into the Industry 4.0 space by investing over R10 million to process automation machines in their Roodepoort factory in Johannesburg. This investment saw the recent installation of six robots with the goal to have a fleet of more than ten before year end.

Digital transformation is fast becoming a common feature in the workplace, with companies reassessing existing production processes to meet the demands of the approaching fourth industrial revolution. “Product manufacture through robotics in our newly automated facility adds value by enabling us to further ensure product quality and increase production volumes while reducing production cost,” says Gerrit Viviers, Chief Operating Officer: Africa, ASSA ABLOY.

ASSA ABLOY elected to use collaborative robotics that work alongside people, and this plays an integral part in the upskilling of workers, providing them with the knowledge and practical experience to manage and work with automation; ongoing training programmes are in place for the entire production team.

In order to successfully specify and implement the automation, ASSA ABLOY has employed an automation engineer to manage these projects. Keeping it local, the company enlisted the services of only South African automation contractors. “As ASSA ABLOY is one of only a very few manufacturers in the ironmongery industry in South Africa, off-the-shelf solutions were simply not an option which presented a challenge to the local automation experts as all solutions had to be tailored to our environment,” explains Viviers. He adds that the automation process and associated cost reductions have also allowed for insourcing of products which were formerly imported, a further investment in the local economy.

The robots have been assigned to various divisions within the plant:

- The lever locks assembly process – compared to the historical manual assembly, the inclusion of robots has greatly improved the manufacturing speed. This new automated process includes twelve employees working in collaboration with the robots, a PLC (Programmable Logic Controller) as well as cameras, leading to continuous improvement in quality.
- The signage and engraving area - ASSA ABLOY tailor-makes directional and information signage for buildings as well as bespoke kick plates and push plates.
- The die casting area where handles and keys are manufactured.
- One robot provides the finishing on brass products and components such as padlocks.

Placing a strong focus on the continuous improvement of employee health and safety, these new robots allow for the redistribution of employees into other or more comfortable environments, enabling the company to operate at elevated levels of performance.

“These value-added production processes and automation enhancements ensure heightened customer service by improving our speed of production and subsequently, our lead times,” affirms Viviers. “We are enthused by the fact that as a local manufacturer invested in South Africa we are positioned to grow to the benefit of all our customers and end-users.”

“Automation and digitalisation is a big part of successful businesses and we are excited about the benefits for our customers as well as the opportunity to grow as a result of market competitiveness,” concludes Viviers.

With the recent introduction of advanced process automation technologies, ASSA ABLOY has augmented its extensive high quality portfolio that includes access control, asset and key management, door furniture, and locking systems, and has solidified its position as an industry leader in door opening solutions.

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About ASSA ABLOY

ASSA ABLOY is the global leader in door opening solutions, dedicated to satisfying end-user needs for security, safety and convenience. Since its formation in 1994, ASSA ABLOY has grown from a regional company into an international group with about 47,000 employees, operations in more than 70 countries and sales close to SEK 71 billion. In the fast-growing electromechanical security segment, the Group has a leading position in areas such as access control, identification technology, entrance automation and hotel security.

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