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ABB drives cut costs for dryer users

Operational and capital costs are significantly reduced following the installation of ABB variable speed drives (VSDs) by drying machinery maker, Simon Dryers.

The company is a manufacturer of bespoke drying machinery, producing around a dozen dryers a year for industries including food, chemicals, pharmaceuticals and waste processing.

One of the major benefits of VSDs is the flexibility they allow to dryer users, helping them both control costs and manage the drying process. Many dryer users specify an oversized dryer, as they may be uncertain of the initial market size for their finished products. A VSD allows them to start at 50 percent drying capacity and then increase this as demand grows, without having to buy another machine.

Also, because many materials that need drying are natural products, their moisture content will often vary. Using VSDs allows dryer rotation speeds to be changed easily, achieving a longer or shorter drying time to account for this variability. PLCs are also increasingly used as part of the dryer solution, allowing customers to access trend data on drying parameters such as temperature and humidity.

Managing Director of Simon Dryers, Christopher Ellis says: "We don't have a standard dryer product. Instead, we take one of the basic types of dryers, drum, rotary, or other and fine tune it to meet the particular drying needs of each customer." Drum dryers are suitable for drying products such as food stuffs, cereals, baby food and fruit, while rotary dryers are used for products such as sugar and chemicals.

The company has been using VSDs to control its dryers for around 10 years. "We always offer ABB drives as our standard. As well as being easy to commission, the drives also make it easy to meet customers' needs for a very big turndown, allowing us to maintain torque across a wide range of speeds," says Ellis.

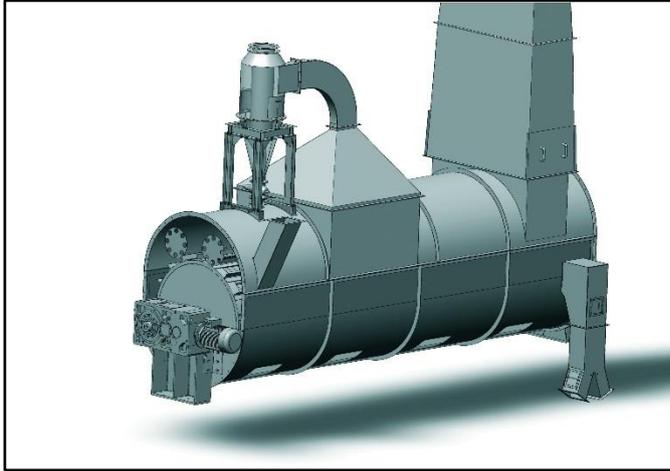
Simon Dryers has a close relationship with ABB Drives Alliance partner Halcyon Drives. Halcyon supplies a range of VSDs to the company, from ABB general machinery drives, ABB standard drives and ABB industrial drives, in ratings from 0.75 kW to 90 kW. "Halcyon is like our drives department," says Ellis. "We specify the power and speed range we want and Halcyon recommends the drive, motor and gear box combination that will suit that particular project. We trust Halcyon and it is good to have that relationship with them."

Some of the dryers need to work in applications that involve an explosion hazard, such as drying flour or products that have been wet with a solvent. In these cases, Halcyon can supply a matched ABB drive and motor pair that meets the requirements of the ATEX directives.

The energy saving abilities of the VSDs is also becoming increasingly important: "Dryer customers want to know about the energy consumption of our products. Although this is usually the heating energy they are concerned about, electrical energy efficiency is playing an ever more important role. The fact that we can minimise the operational costs of the dryers through using VSDs is a good selling point for us," says Ellis.

"We have had a good relationship with ABB and Halcyon for 10 years," adds Ellis. "Although customers sometimes ask us for alternative VSDs to ABB, we are reluctant to use an inferior product."

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Caption: Operational and capital costs are significantly reduced following the installation of ABB variable speed drives by drying machine maker, Simon Dryers.

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For more information please contact:

Layla Hewitt
Marketing Communications
Phone: 01925 741517
Email: layla.hewitt@gb.abb.com

ABB Ltd.
Daresbury Park
Daresbury
Warrington WA4 4BT

Emma Jenkinson
Armitage Communications
Phone 020 8667 2218
Email: emma.jenkinson@armitage-comms.co.uk