DTG Limited of Merseyside, UK, is a company with a 50-year history of excellence in the design, manufacture and supply of confectionery equipment – as well as quality manufacturing solutions for many other industries. The company’s FINN name represents the very highest standards in the coating & polishing of chocolate dragées; a dragée being a bite-sized form of confectionery that has a hard outer shell.

The company was formed in 1962 in a small workshop in Birkenhead, UK. Formerly owned and operated by Frank Finn – where the ‘Finn’ brand originated. The company provided a variety of quality production equipment to the confectionery industry, quickly establishing itself as a market leader with ‘Finn’ Belt Coaters & ‘Finn’ Belt Polishers.

Today, with hundreds of ‘Finn’ belt coaters and polishers in reliable daily operation globally, DTG Limited ‘Finn’ continues to set the standard in belt coating technology, with machines that increase production and lower
the man hours in panning environments. Now available in various capacities from 78 litres to 710 litres, Finn belt coaters are used to cover various centres with chocolate, yoghurt or chocolate-flavoured compounds all over the world.

Its customers include global confectionery industry leaders such as Cadbury/Kraft, Mondelez, Masterfoods and Nestlé, along with leading American chocolate producers. The company also supplies to smaller niche chocolate confectionery producers and those developing their brands in high-growth developing economies.

The Enhanced Finn Coater, fitted with integral spray and drip Systems is operated via a recipe-driven control solution running on an Allen-Bradley automation solution from Rockwell Automation. Major elements include a drip system for medium batch production work. This is designed to coat typical dragée assortments such as peanuts, hazelnuts, almonds, raisins, soft fruits, toffee balls, biscuits, wafers, fondants, coffee beans and freeze-dried products using an internal Drip Bar with chocolate or chocolate-like masses.

The spray system provides the additional facility to spray various small and intricate products such as corn or bran flakes, corn balls, puffed rice and various types of health seeds (for example sunflower and pumpkin seeds). It is also capable of coating irregular and flat shaped products such as freeze dried banana, popcorn and walnuts.

In operation, once the typical dragée has been loaded into the machine, the recipe is initiated and the tumbling of the product begins in the drum, with timings and parameters all being bespoke to suit the product to be coated and to customers’ specific requirements. Next the chocolate supply is energised, allowing small amounts of chocolate to drip or to be spray-fed onto the typical dragée. Assisted by the addition of chilled air, the product is coated, typically using a drip or spray system, a ratio of anywhere from 0.5:1 to 7:1 can be achieved.

The machine uses a variety of Allen-Bradley® products, including an Allen-Bradley CompactLogix™ programmable automation controller (PAC), an Allen-Bradley PanelView™ HMI and Allen Bradley PowerFlex® PF525 inverters.

“Finn” branded coaters and polishers are a valuable, reliable, cost-effective and efficient addition to the chocolate confectioner’s production process, replacing the traditional “pan” style machines which can be costly and inefficient in operation. Confectioner benefit from consistent quality, high performance on a daily basis with minimal down time, reversible and variable speed hygienic polypropylene belt, quick unloading and easy cleaning, rapid cooling of the chocolate, making the product ready for polishing as soon as possible, visible results for simple quality inspection and control, low labour requirements, bespoke programming through control panel technology and excellent machine residual value.

According to Lyn Pitt, Managing Director: “This is a new association and partnership for DTG Limited and we selected Rockwell Automation particularly, since we feel through its marketing communication that it reflects the same ethos towards its clients as we do – with an emphasis on solution-led products, responsiveness and ongoing partnership and support.”

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