

## BFM<sup>®</sup> fitting makes daily connector changeover 75% faster on packaging lines

### The challenge

Richard Whittaker Ltd has been a UK-based specialist in the blending, packing and supplying industry for over 50 years. They employ over 120 staff and operate several blenders and numerous packing lines, equipping them to cope with the demands of big businesses. State-of-the-art filling machines allow them to pack weights from 10g to 1000kg into a broad range of bags, packs, tubs and sachets.

In the main production area, the company operates 5 lines. Products on these lines are regularly changed, often up to 10 times per week. Each time the line is changed, it is cleaned and the flexible connectors between the equipment are replaced. These flexible connectors are recognised as common hotspots for a range of problems on the plant.

The site used clear “carrier bag-like” connectors held in place by jubilee clips above their fillers. The process to changeover these rudimentary connectors was extremely time consuming; collecting a new bag, undoing the clips, holding the bag in place and re-attaching the clips would take around 20 minutes. This would need to be repeated for each line change. The process was exacerbated by the location of the connector, which is at a substantial height of 3.5m off the ground.

Furthermore, the “carrier bag-like” connectors couldn't be reused. This meant the client was required to dispose of them after each line change, equating to roughly 20 connectors per week. Additionally, the connectors would fail regularly and leak.

Knowing there must be a more efficient alternative out there, the maintenance manager contacted ProSpare in 2015 looking for a way to reduce their changeover times and wastage.

**250 hours per year**  
saved in connector changeover time

**~1000 bags per year**  
no longer used and disposed of



Single-use “carrier bag-like” clamp banded connectors

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## The solution and improvement

A ProSpare process improvement engineer visited the maintenance manager at Richard Whittaker Ltd to assess the issues outlined. After inspecting the plant, they recommended replacing the clear “carrier bag-like” connector with BFM® fitting.

BFM®’s snap-in technology provides a 100% dust tight seal and allows quick, simple and tool-free changeover. BFM® Seeflex 040E flexible connectors were specified for their durability and visible product flow.

BFM® fitting is now installed on 2 of the 5 main production lines. Almost a decade after the initial install the maintenance manager visited ProSpare at an exhibition and spoke highly of BFM® fitting:

Previously, connector changeover took 20 minutes and the product on the line changed up to 10 times per week. With BFM® fitting changeover time is now just 5 minutes, a reduction of 75%, much of which is spent gaining access to the connector itself. This results in a saving of approximately 250 hours per year.

The BFM® fitting system is also far more sustainable than the previous bag-like connectors. 2-3 BFM® fitting connectors are used in rotation on each line and the client has indicated that each connector typically lasts up to 3 years. In contrast, the bag-like connectors were considered disposable and replaced after the product on each line was changed. Based on client estimates, this would result in the disposal of 1000 bag-like connectors across the 2 lines each year.

On the improvements BFM® fitting has made the maintenance manager stated:

“I like that BFM® allows us to visually see the product flowing through the line and how well it contains the products, but most importantly how easy it is to replace BFM®.

From a maintenance perspective it saves us hours of time per week on downtime and cleaning!”



BFM® fitting installed on Richard Whittaker Ltd packing line



BFM® fitting Seeflex connector typically lasts up to 3 years

 **BFM**fitting

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