

COST-CUTTING IDEA

FILE

Mobile Flow Racks Slash Cost, Time

Lithonia is the nation's largest manufacturer of lighting products, offering thousands for residential, commercial and industrial applications. It was the number and variety of products that challenged Six Sigma project manager Willie Johnson when he looked to improve assembly line productivity at the company's plant in Cochran, Georgia.

Lithonia was using a conveyor assembly line that incorporated fixed-place flow systems and full pallet stations. Over the past few years, customer demand for greater product variety, style and function changed product assembly requirements from an ongoing operation with few changeovers to one that was



interrupted with many changeovers. Johnson decided that one way to meet the changing requirements of the production process was to switch from fixed racks to a mobile rack system that would offer increased flexibility in setting up and modifying assembly operation.

Johnson contacted Georgia Storage Systems, Keneco's distributor in Atlanta, and mobile racks were installed on the Gotham Downlight GRSF/AFV product line. This line, under the direction of line supervisor Geneva Tinsley, assembles more than 50

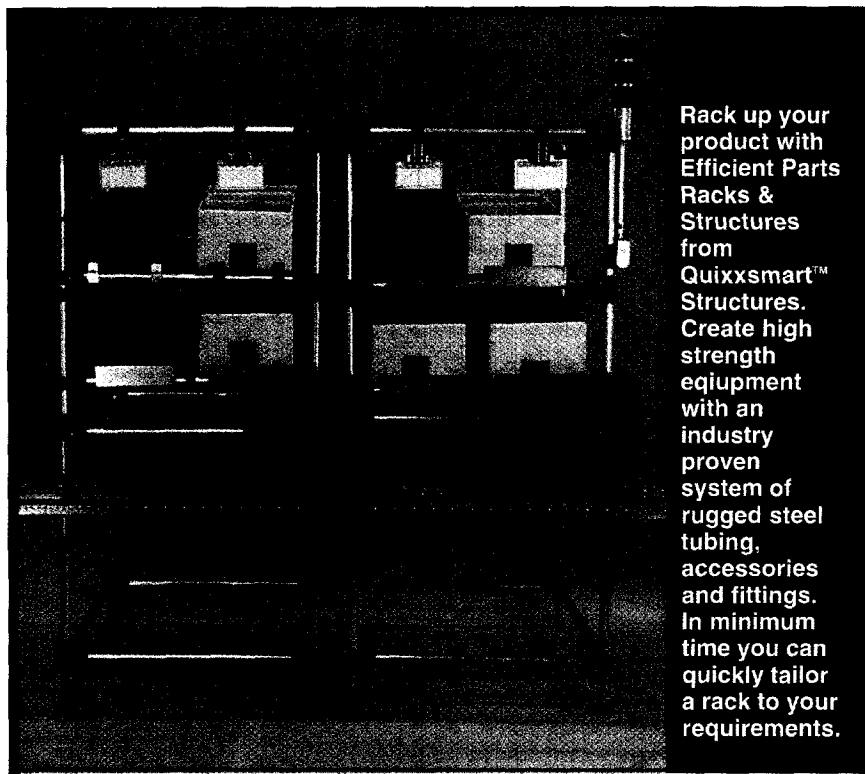
models of Lithonia's Vertisys lighting fixture. The new mobile racks provide new flexibility in moving material in and out of the assembly line, allow parts to be positioned closer to the operators, and offer better identification methods for part location. In addition, if the GRSF/AFV product were to be built on a different assembly line within the plant, the mobile flow system could be moved easily to the needed line.

"The use of mobile racks reduced staging time by 20 percent to 25 percent and, because of better positioning on the line, increased assembly efficiency as well," according to Johnson.

Adds Tinsley, "Another benefit not to be overlooked is the ease with which the plant floor can be cleaned, improving the workplace environment."

"Keneco's mobile flow racks are a great concept for manufacturing that involves high-volume changeover rates such as those on our GRSF/AFV assembly line," concludes Johnson. "It's a concept that we can spread across the plant, simplifying the process of changing from order to order when different parts are required."

Mobile flow racks by Keneco Inc.
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3 Lakeland Park Drive
Peabody, MA 01960
(978) 536-5000 Fax (978) 536-5055
email sales@worksmartsystems.com
Visit our website at www.quixxsmart.com

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