

# THE BUNDLER WAS STANDING IDLE ... THAT MADE NO SENSE

In the tissue packaging technology market Plusline wanted to set new efficiency standards. Business Development Director Matteo Giardini explains how they went about it. A TWM report.



Anyone who has recently visited Lidl, Aldi or indeed any highly price-competitive supermarket, will have noticed the increasing use of display-ready pallets (DRPs). As the name suggests, these are loaded in such a way that the consumer can access products directly from the pallet, which is delivered to the shop floor with a pallet truck and replaced as a complete unit when empty. There is no need to stack or replenish shelves and it is a format which is increasingly used to sell tissue products along with many other consumer items.

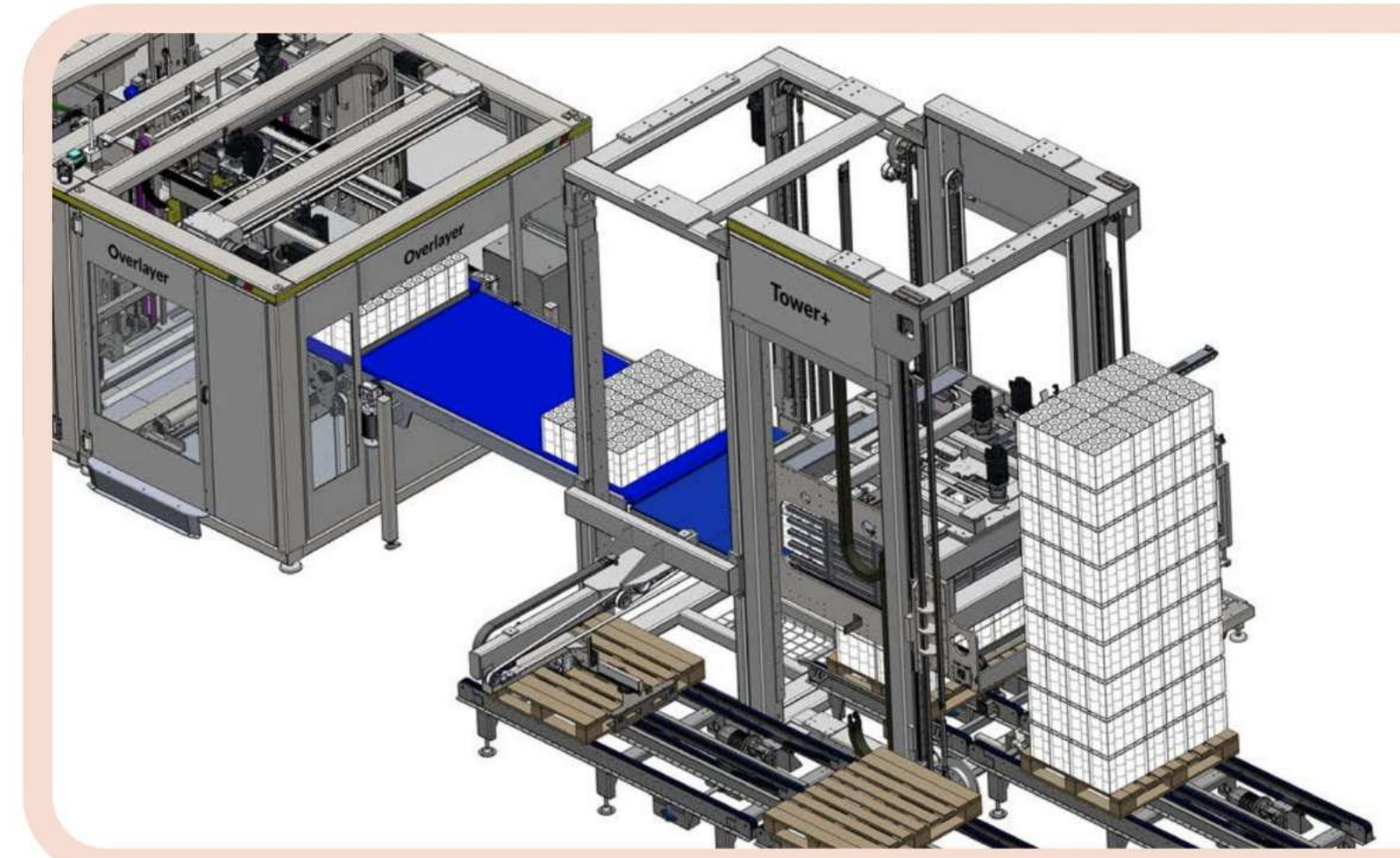
This developing trend means that bundling of tissue products for delivery to retail customers is not always required, because consumers shopping for groceries just grab the product directly from the pallet in the store. This also has the benefit of reducing plastic consumption. When Plusline entered the tissue packaging technology market in 2018 our focus was wrapping and the seamless transition from log saw to wrapper. The aim was to set new standards in terms of space-saving and efficiency. Bundling wasn't really on our radar, let alone palletising. But then we introduced the Overpack high-speed automatic bundler to satisfy market needs for flexibility and substantial wrapping-material reduction with horizontal and vertical cores in multiple configurations. A further turning point came during discussions with some tissue colleagues last year. They were expressing frustration with the fact that at the end of their converting/packaging line,

when producing DRP, the bundler was either idle or just used as an "expensive by-pass conveyor" while the palletiser was operating. It struck them as a sub-optimal use of resources.

## THE FIRST INTEGRATION IN THE SECTOR

We identified a challenge, and created the first machine in the tissue sector to integrate palletiser and bundler, capable of both bundled and DRP products with no limitations in the composition of the layer mosaic. We named its palletising unit Tower+ after the towers which are familiar on the skyline of our hometown Bologna (and it is compact but quite tall). When combined with the Overlayer patented forming solution, integrated with our bundling machine, you have the possibility of forming any layer with both bundled and display-ready product. It faithfully follows the Futura/Plusline philosophy of process simplification.

The first Overlayer&Tower+ delivery, one of two ordered by the same customer, is due for startup in Latin America during the second quarter of 2024. We shall also be delivering a complete Overlayer&Tower+ installation to FuturaLab for customer trials from June this year. The motivation for creating a single machine for bundling and palletising is not purely to avoid investing in technology which is underutilized. There is also the considerable space-saving which also reduces project capex. A bundler together with a high-end palletizer will typically occupy 30-40 linear meters on the factory floor. Overlayer&Tower+ require just 15 m.



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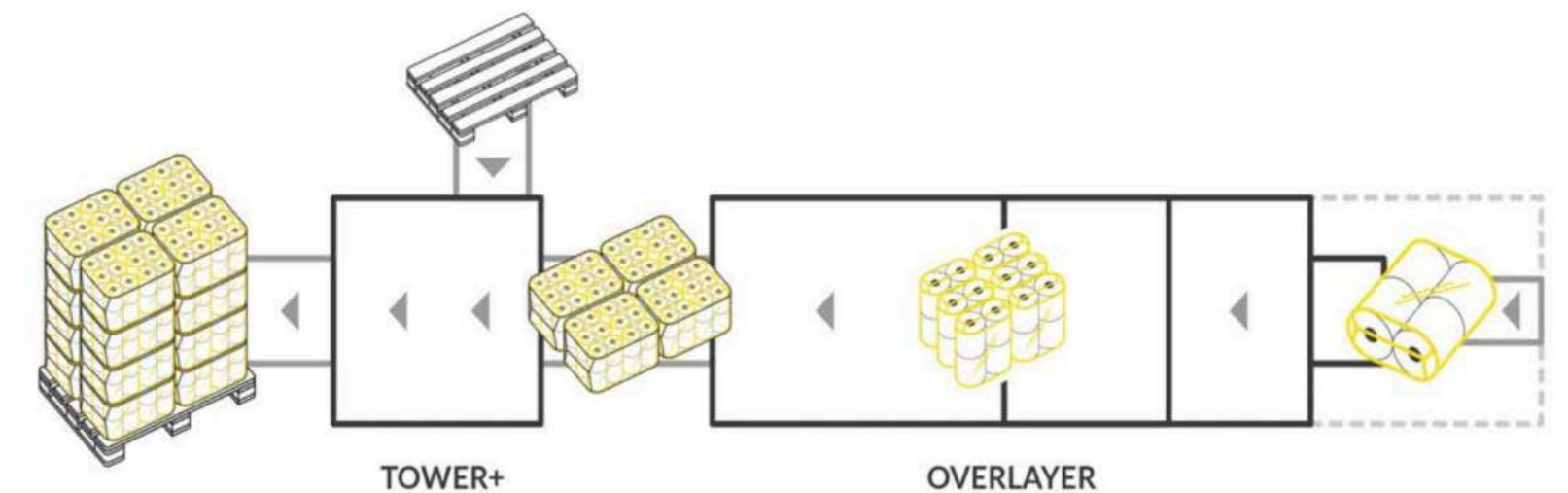
Apart from lower total cost of ownership (TCO) the reduced footprint also has positive implications for the role of the operator, along with high levels of automation. Their supervising role becomes less about physical intervention and more about oversight and process management, just as with our parent company Futura's Andromeda converting line.

New ideas such as this can challenge those with a risk-averse mindset. This is understandable. Decision makers are judged on results, good and bad. However, in the current scenario where DRPs have gained a large market share in Europe and are starting to catch the imagination of retailers in North America, a solution which combines bundling and palletizing in a single technology is essentially de-risking part of the packaging process.

## FLEXIBLE FOR THE FUTURE

Nobody can accurately predict the trajectory for DRP versus traditional retail display, but a solution which genuinely combines both options ensures full capacity utilisation, no matter how the market evolves. It also enables producers who are fully focused on bundles to offer the option of DRPs should their customers start to demand them. The logistics benefits and reduction in use of plastic with DRPs compared with bundles suggest this trend will only go in one direction. DRPs are limited in that the packs must be of a certain size to ensure the integrity of the pallet. However, the market is moving towards larger packs anyway.

So how does it work? In simple terms, the bundler either creates the bundle configuration, whatever that might be, or it creates the layers for palletizing.



**Space saving and efficiency:** Plusline's aim was to set new standards for the industry