Varland Plating Embraces Copia to Maintain Technological Advantage

Varland Plating, a Cincinnati, Ohio-based electroplating company with a rich family legacy, has successfully transformed its operations and maintained its competitive edge by leveraging the Copia Industrial DevOps Platform.

With a history of embracing technology to stay ahead in the electroplating industry, Varland Plating processes small metal parts in bulk using a series of chemical treatments and electric currents to enhance their appearance, functionality, and corrosion resistance. As an early adopter of industrial automation, the company has consistently invested in technological advancements.

"Varland Plating was founded 80 years ago," said Toby Varland, Vice President at Varland. "We've been using automation for over 35 years, including sensors that monitor and control tank temperatures, solution levels, automated chemical feeds, rectifiers, motors, exhausts, safety sensors, etc. As a job shop, we need to have the agility to write and deploy new code quickly to meet the shifting demands of our customers."

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COPIA

Varland employs PLCs (programmable logic controllers) to automate and monitor their plating process, ensuring quality and efficiency. These PLCs control everything from load size verification to plating parameters, drying, and even tracking parts using RFID tags. This comprehensive automation allows the company to consistently deliver high-quality results that meet customer expectations across various industries and a wide range of parts.

Despite decades of success, Varland faced significant challenges with the management of their PLC code. The company relied on legacy hardware and software, which while reliable, lacked modern features for code change tracking, review, and documentation. This led to inefficiencies and increased errors due to the limited manual process for managing and reviewing code changes.

Transitioning for the future

In their search for a solution to these inefficiencies, Varland discovered Copia Automation, a platform designed to bring DevOps best practices from the IT sector to industrial automation. Copia's detailed code change tracking, review capabilities, and improved code sharing and transparency resonated with Varland's need for tighter oversight and enhanced accountability.

Varland decided to transition legacy control systems to CODESYS, leveraging Copia's advanced features to significantly improve their automation processes.

"Finding a solution like Copia that's able to take a CODESYS project file and render that into a diff file that everyone can understand was a huge motivating factor for me," said Varland.

Varland added that, "first pass code quality is up and the percentage of code changes that are feature changes vs. fix changes has increased."

Varland also pointed out a powerful workforce difference that Copia brought with it. "I also was able to bring in a summer intern with very little experience and enable him to do a lot because I had a way to review his code. Before Copia, I would have had to seriously limit what I had him work on due to the difficulty of managing his code."

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Simply Transformative

The implementation of Copia Automation has been transformative for Varland Plating. Key benefits include:

1. **Enhanced Code Review and Accountability:** Using Copia, Varland can now track and review code changes much more efficiently. With a single source of truth for coding, the company is empowered to set high standards for code quality with multiple sets of eyes tracking every change in one central location.

2. **Improved Team Communication and Collaboration:** The Copia Industrial DevOps Platform has facilitated better communication among team members. By requiring code reviews and utilizing detailed commit messages, Varland has fostered a more collaborative environment, ensuring that all changes are thoroughly vetted and understood.

3. **Increased Efficiency and Reduced Downtime:** The advanced tracking and review features have led to fewer production issues and a noticeable decrease in downtime. Production staff have reported improved performance and fewer errors, attributing these improvements to the rigorous oversight enabled by Copia.

4. **Future-Proofing Operations:** The switch to CODESYS and the integration with Copia have positioned Varland for future growth. The new system is scalable and adaptable, allowing Varland to continue innovating and maintaining their competitive edge in a rapidly evolving industry.

By embracing Copia Automation, Varland Plating has not only improved its current operations but also set the stage for continued success and innovation. This partnership illustrates the importance of integrating advanced automation solutions to stay competitive in today's industrial landscape.

"Copia has been life-changing," said Varland. "It's not a luxury but an essential cost of doing business that we cannot afford to be without. With Copia, we are setting new standards for quality and efficiency to ensure we stay ahead of the competition."

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Challenges:

- Reliance on legacy hardware and software lacking modern features
- Inefficient processes for tracking and reviewing code changes
- Reducing the risk of errors and downtime

Solutions:

- Implementation of the Copia Industrial DevOps Platform for advanced code changes, tracking, and review
- Transition from legacy control language to CODESYS
- Access enhanced communication and collaboration tools to gain efficiencies

Benefits:

- Improved code quality and reduced errors
- Better team collaboration and accountability
- Increased efficiency and reduced production downtime
- Future-proofing operations for continued growth and innovation

Meet with the Copia team

Visit copia.io to learn how you can implement the Copia Industrial DevOps Platform in your manufacturing business. To learn more about Varland Plating or to request their services, please visit varland.com or reach out to sales@varland.com.