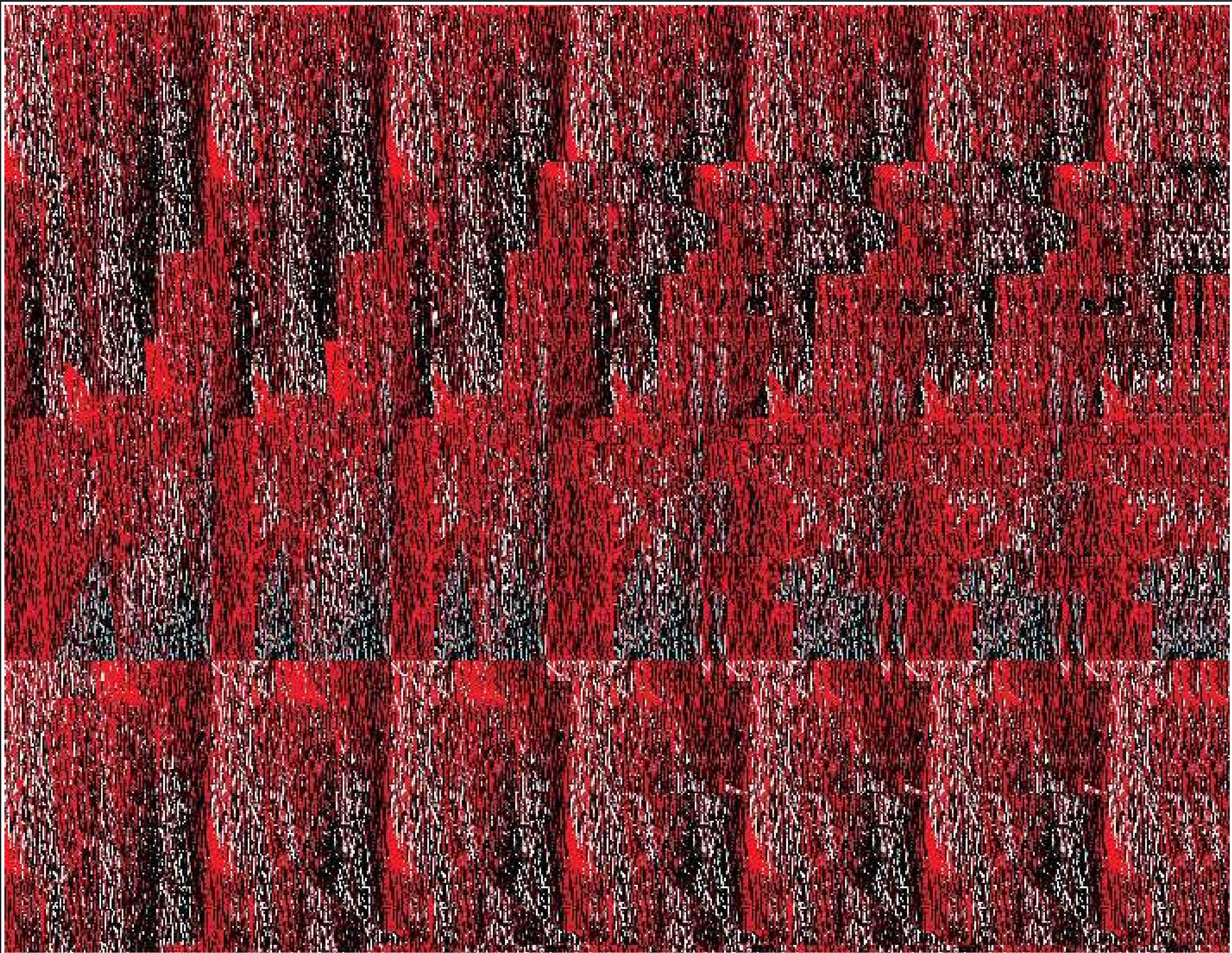


MAGIC EYE

"Utilisation hides more than it reveals."



THE ILLUSION OF BUSY



Forward

Most organisations don't have a capacity problem.

They have a focus problem.

This book exists for anyone who has ever looked at a full calendar, a stretched team, or a factory running flat out – and still felt that progress was somehow harder than it should be.

Being busy feels productive. It looks efficient. It's easy to defend. But busy can also be a disguise. One that hides fragility, masks wasted effort, and quietly limits growth.

That's the illusion.

Inside these pages, you'll find a short story, real outsourcing case studies, and something slightly unexpected: Magic Eye stereograms. They're here on purpose.

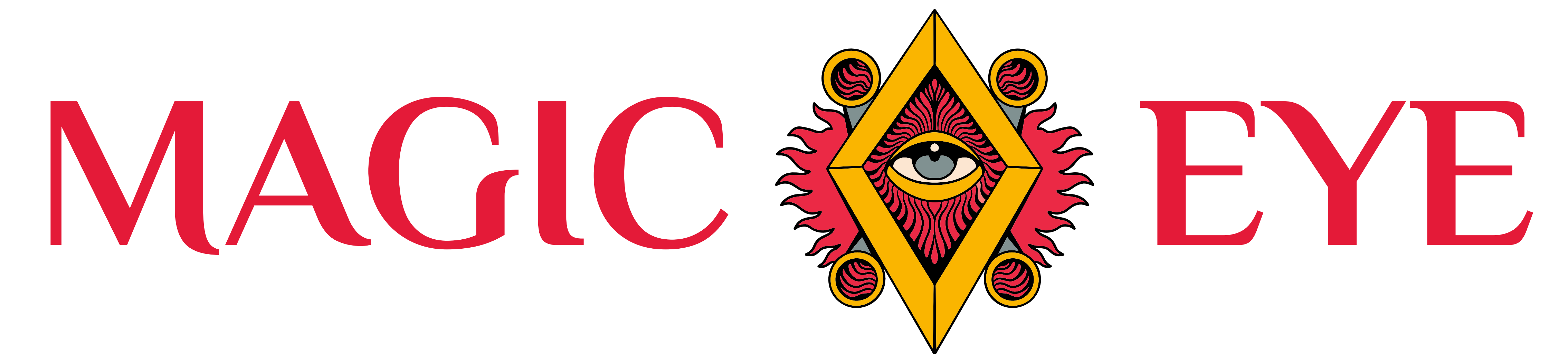
Magic Eye images reward a change in focus, not extra effort. Stare too hard at a stereogram and all you see is noise. Relax, and a hidden structure appears. The illusion of busy works the same way. When organisations fixate on utilisation and activity, clarity disappears. Only when focus shifts does performance come into view.

The 'Illusion of Busy' story introduces the idea.

The case studies show what happens when focus is protected.

The images remind you – playfully – that insight doesn't come from pushing harder.

This isn't about doing less. It's about doing the right work, in the right place, with the right level of intent. You're invited to read this when you're simply "too busy" not to.



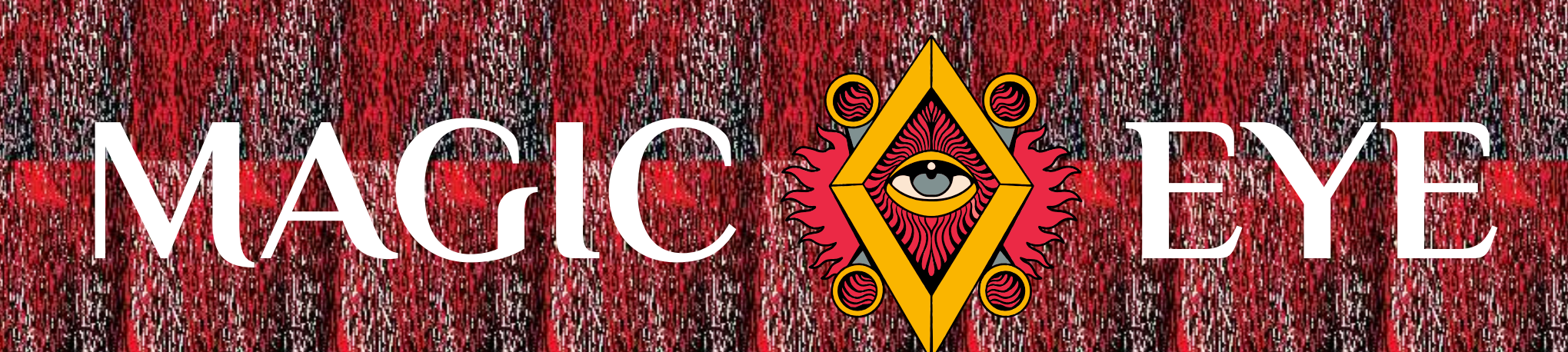
How to view a 3D Stereogram

Take your finger for example. Bring it close to your eyes. The idea is to make your eyes look behind the finger and, instead of one finger, you will want to see 2 fingers. This is exactly what we want to achieve: to move the focus of the eyes behind the actual image. When looking at objects really close it's easy to have the eyes out of focus. But, a stereogram can be best seen at about 40 cm of your eyes, that's why it's much harder to move the focus away from actual stereogram.

If you're not trained to look at stereograms, this might take you some time. First time I've looked at a stereogram it took me like an hour to finally be able to focus the eyes correctly to see the 3D image.

Other techniques to see stereograms

Bring the stereogram image really close to your eyes (until you touch it with your nose). At this distance your eyes cannot focus on the image and they look somewhere behind the image. Now, slowly push the image away from you or move slowly back, while trying to keep the eyes off focus. At some point you will see the hidden image or message.



HINT
"An important word
hides in the noise."

The Illusion of Busy

High utilisation isn't the same as high performance. That's the rational truth. Walk through almost any manufacturing business and you'll hear the same reassurance...

"Everyone's flat out."

Calendars are full. Engineers are booked weeks ahead. Production is running at maximum utilisation. On the surface, it feels like a healthy operation.

Busy. Productive. Efficient.

But we all know, these three outcomes don't always add up to being effective. And in many cases, it's a warning sign.

High utilisation often looks good on a spreadsheet, but it rarely tells the full story of performance. In fact, it can actively hide the very problems that limit growth.

When utilisation becomes the goal

Utilisation is a useful metric until it becomes the objective rather than the outcome.

When teams are pushed to stay constantly occupied, there's no slack in the system. No space to absorb variation. No room to respond to change. Every unexpected event from a late component, or an engineering change, to a quality issue ripples through the operation.

The result? Firefighting replaces flow. Short-term fixes replace long-term improvement. And people confuse motion with progress. In these environments, fragility can rise instead of productivity.

When you're flat out

What high utilisation often masks is where time really goes.

Engineers spend hours context-switching between urgent requests. Production teams wait on information, parts, or decisions. Managers fill the gaps by working longer days, approving exceptions, or personally unblocking issues.

“Everyone looks busy!”

Output doesn't move proportionally. This is the illusion of busy: a system that feels stretched but delivers diminishing returns.

When busy organisations struggle to grow

Growth can quickly fail when demand disappears, but it fails more because systems can't absorb it.

In our experience working with machine builders and OEMs who find themselves in these predicaments and when utilisation is already near 100%, they report things like having no capacity left for responding to customer volatility, onboarding new programmes, or training new people. And that's not all. Improving processes also takes a backseat and the time required to integrate new capabilities can't be found.

Every new order adds stress over scale. Ironically, the businesses that appear most “efficient” are often the least adaptable.

Focus is the real constraint

The limiting factor in most engineering-led organisations isn't labour. It's focus.

Highly skilled people spend disproportionate time on work that:

1

Could be standardised

2

Could be modularised

3

Could be externalised

This is where outsourcing is often misunderstood.

Outsourcing is about removing the noise. The most effective outsourcing relationships don't replace internal capability. In fact, they protect it and create space for internal teams to properly flourish.

Magic Eye images come to mind (Remember the Magic Eye books that got everyone straining for some sort of clarity in the 90s – yes? – well), they reward a change in focus, not extra effort. Stare too hard at a stereogram and all you see is noise. Relax, and a hidden structure appears. The illusion of busy works the same way. When organisations fixate on utilisation and activity, clarity disappears. Only when focus shifts does performance come into view.

You've probably heard something like – or indeed said something like this yourself... "If only we had more time to..."

This is about allowing for focus, and the preamble to so many constraints that OEMs share with us, and it often leads to...

... concentrate on system architecture, not assembly

... spend time on design quality, not rework

... plan ahead instead of reacting

... focus on differentiation, not throughput

When production support is handled by a partner built for repeatability, resilience, and scale, performance will rise. And that's serious leverage.

What high-performing systems actually look like

The healthiest production environments often look... calm. Because the system is absorbing complexity without constant escalation. There's visible slack. There's predictable flow. There's time allocated for improvement, not just output.

Busy factories chase activity. High-performing factories actively 'design' capacity.

So, it might just be time to rethink the metric... If your organisation is proud of being permanently stretched, it's worth asking a different set of questions:

Where does our best talent actually add value?

How much time is spent enabling work rather than doing it?

Are we optimised for utilisation or for outcomes?

At PP Control & Automation, we see this pattern repeatedly. The breakthrough rarely comes from adding more people. It comes from changing where effort is applied.

The goal was never to be busy, but rather, to perform.

**“AND THAT'S
SERIOUS
LEVERAGE.”**

Mini Case Study

MAZAK

Mazak UK collaborated with PP C&A to develop the CV5-500, a fully simultaneous 5-axis machining center designed and built entirely in the UK.

PP C&A's 'Design for Manufacturing' team worked closely with Mazak engineers to create a modular control system that streamlined production and allowed for easy customisation. This partnership enabled Mazak to launch the CV5-500 in March 2020, meeting competitive pricing and performance targets.

The collaboration exemplifies how combining expertise can lead to innovative manufacturing solutions that benefit both companies and their customers.

“The relationship works so well because we both bring our own areas of expertise to the table, challenging and working through ideas that provide mutual benefits and unrivalled performance for our customers.”

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR, MAZAK UK

Read the full case study at <https://www.ppcanda.com/case-studies/mazak-uk/>

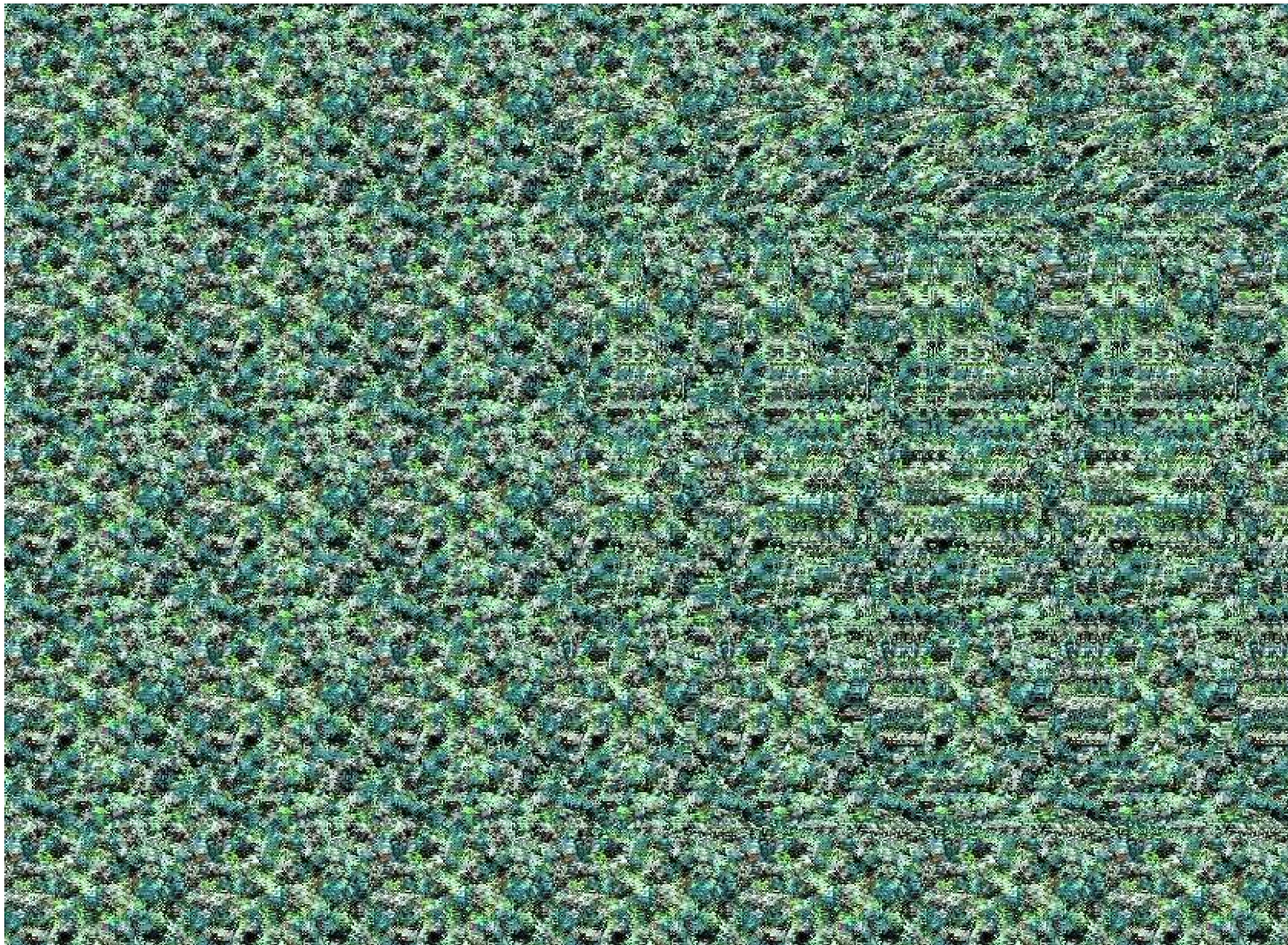


MAGIC EYE

HINT

"An interlaced loop form, resembling a three-dimensional knot."





MAGIC EYE

HINT

"My minutes fall grain by grain.."

Mini Case Study

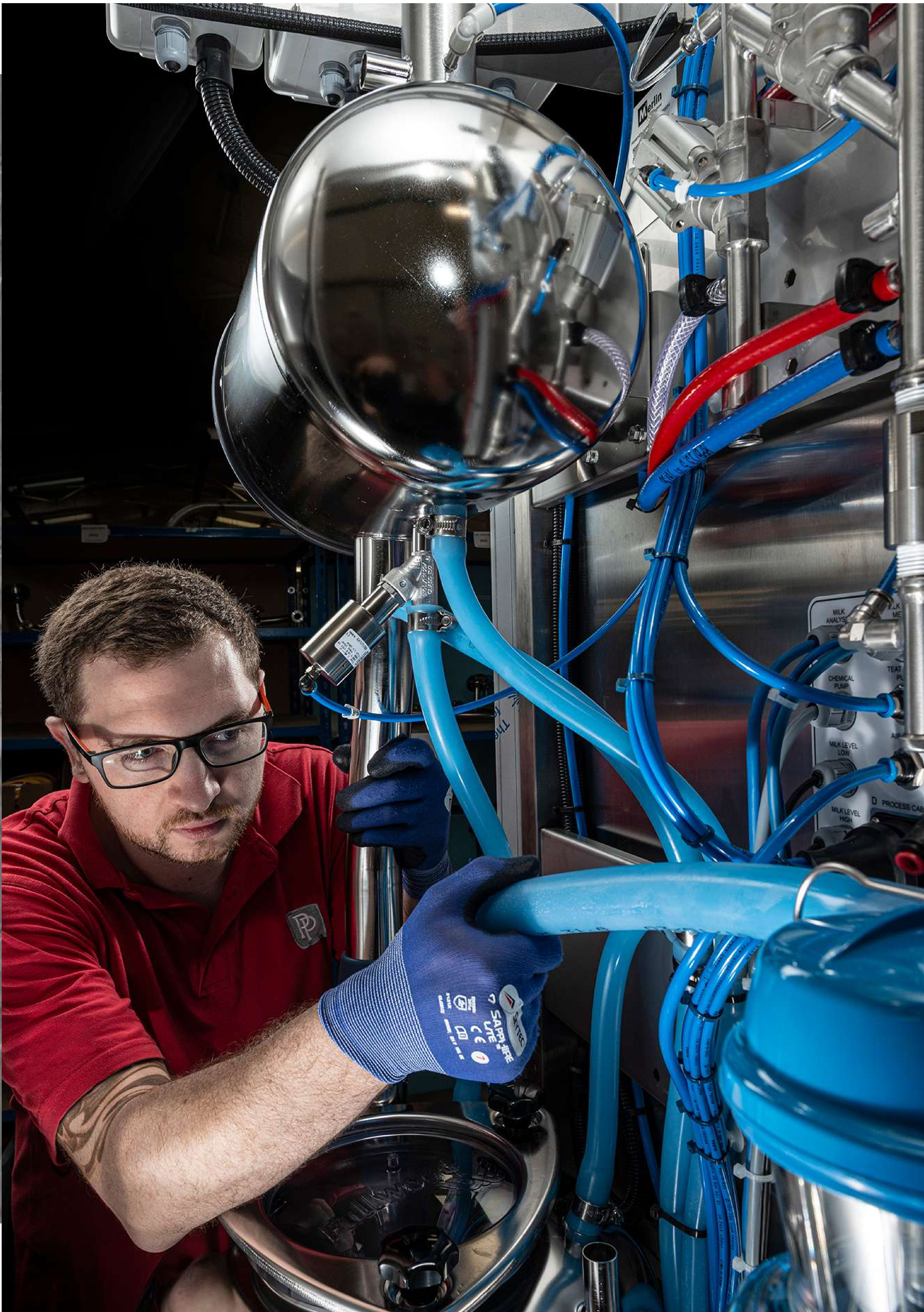
Fullwood Joz

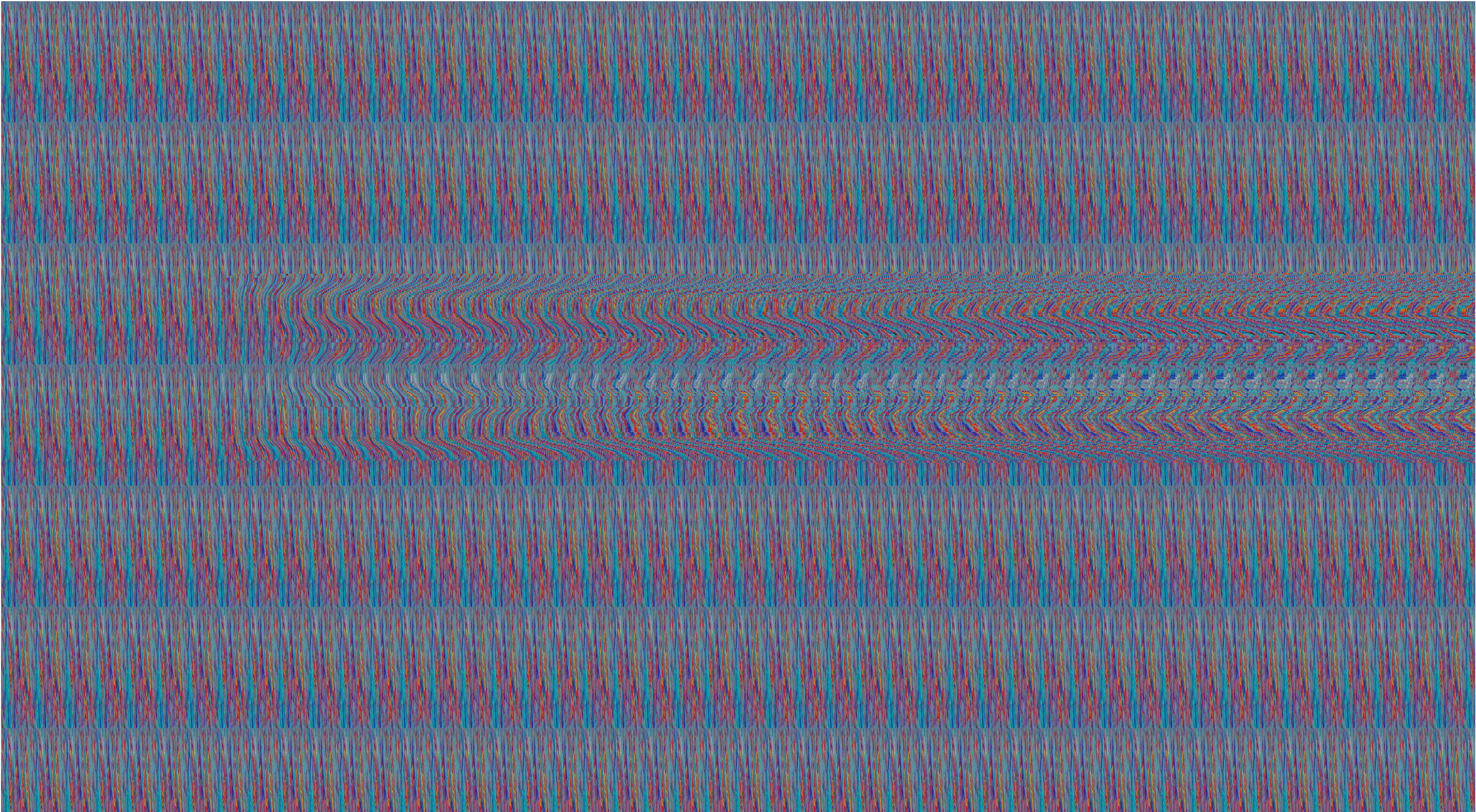
Fullwood Joz, a leading manufacturer of robotic milking systems, partnered with PP C&A to enhance production of their M²erlin machines. Facing increased demand, they sought to streamline the build process, manage costs, and double capacity without expanding production space or labour. PP C&A's 'design for manufacture' team revised build processes, integrating electrical and mechanical controls into a single outsourcing approach. This strategic partnership enabled Fullwood Joz to double production, maintain lead times, and meet international safety standards, including UL508a.

“The strategic outsourcing agreement marks a paradigm shift in the way we manufacture and manage our supply chains.”

GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR, FULLWOOD JOZ

Read the full case study at <https://www.ppcanda.com/case-studies/fullwood-packo/>





MAGIC EYE

HINT

"Walk through almost any manufacturing business and you'll hear the same reassurance..."

Mini Case Study

INVENTOR-E

Inventor-e partnered with PP C&A to bring the iVendScale+ to market, benefiting from streamlined production, rapid prototyping, and improved scalability. The outsourcing partnership enabled Inventor-e to focus on innovation whilst leveraging PP C&A's expertise in DFMA, engineering and production. By entrusting the build and assembly of their advanced inventory management system, Inventor-e reduced time-to-market and operational complexities. The collaboration also ensured consistent product quality and supported the seamless integration of cutting-edge weight sensor technology. As a result, Inventor-e could meet growing demand efficiently, enhancing their reputation as a leader in smart inventory control solutions.

"Thanks to the relationship with PP C&A we have brought a new solution to market quicker than our competitors, a new solution that will change the way factories manage their inventory for years to come."

FOUNDER, INVENTOR-E

Read the full case study at <https://www.ppcanda.com/case-studies/inventor-e-ivendscale/>



Mini Case Study

EBAR

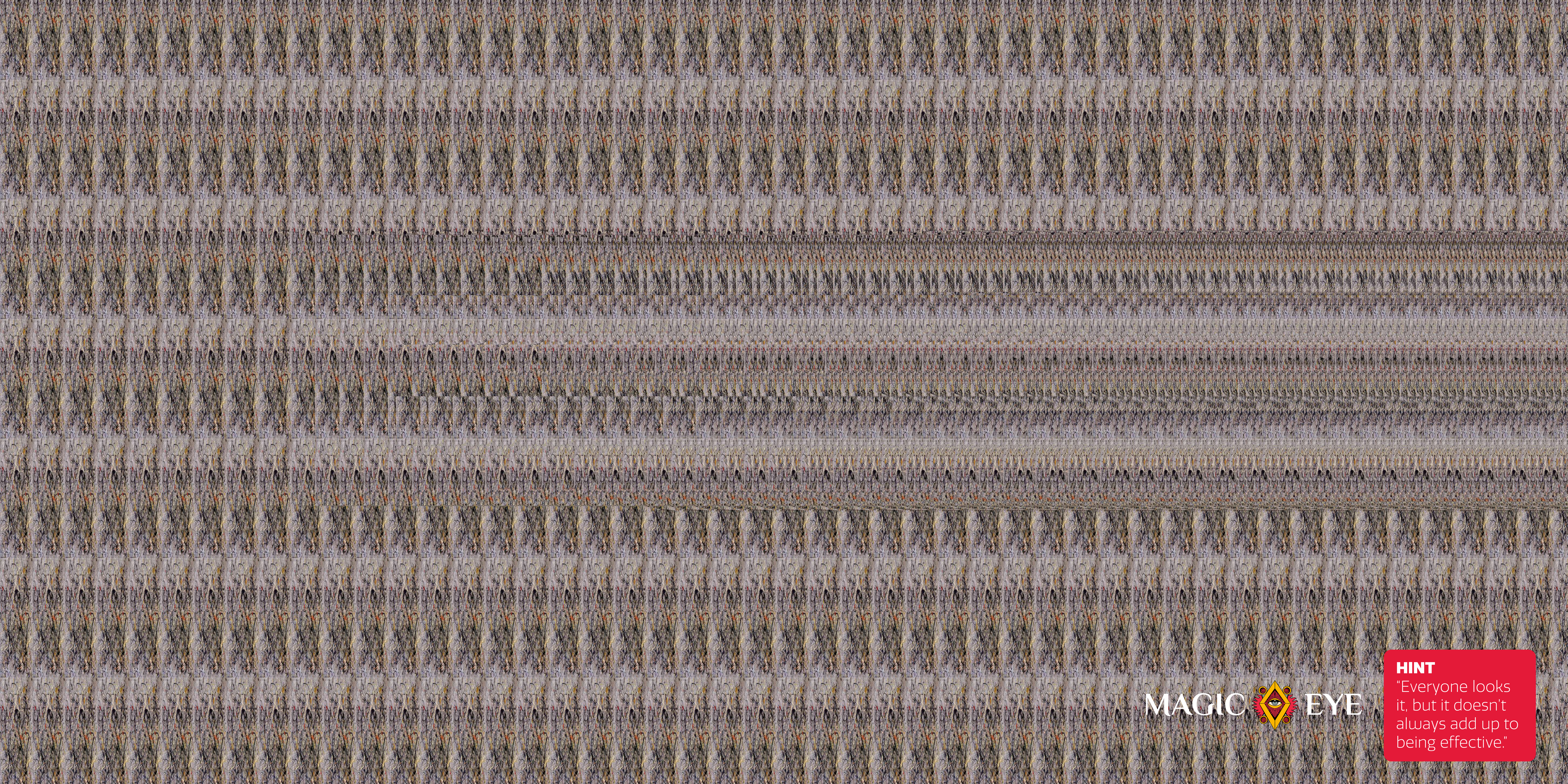
EBar, a West Yorkshire tech business behind automated self-serve draught drink dispensers, extended its manufacturing partnership with PP Control & Automation to scale production as demand surged. Known for its patented Beerwall® technology capable of pouring 200 pints per hour, EBar secured numerous venue contracts and aimed to install 100 units by the end of 2025. PP C&A's team established a dedicated production cell in the West Midlands, tripling build capacity and improving quality control. The collaboration also saw PP C&A manage the full supply chain, helping cut costs, shorten lead times and support future growth.

“Our outsourcing relationship gives us the manufacturing confidence that we will meet current order times, as well as having the scale-up capability to ramp production to hundreds of Beerwall® units each year.”

MANAGING DIRECTOR, EBAR



Read the full case study at <https://www.ppcanda.com/case-studies/ebar/>



MAGIC  EYE

HINT

"Everyone looks
it, but it doesn't
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being effective."

Your Invitation to Form a Strategic Partnership.

If you are in a position to discuss upcoming projects whereby the strategic outsourcing approach makes business sense, then we would welcome the opportunity.

In an industry where efficiency, innovation, and reliability are paramount, forming strategic partnerships is essential for success. At PP C&A, we are committed to empowering machine builders and OEMs with the expertise, advanced capabilities, and dedicated support needed to excel in every project.

By partnering with us, you gain access to cutting-edge solutions in electrical control and automation, electronics assembly, mechanical design, and more. Together, we can streamline your operations, reduce costs, and enhance the performance and reliability of your machines.

Let's work together to overcome constraints and seize new opportunities. Contact us today to discover how a strategic partnership can transform your operations and fuel your success

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Module or Assembly Based, Part or Full Machine Build

Do things better and faster, with less risk.

PP Control & Automation is an award-winning provider of strategic outsourcing solutions to many of the most successful and respected machine builders worldwide.

The PP C&A approach to manufacturing starts with understanding your business pain. This pain is often a constraint to further growth. Commonly, they are centred around people and space, or production lead times and supply chain management. PP C&A alleviate these constraints by building relationships, strategies and manufacturing solutions that help you focus on your core competencies and comfortably and confidently leave the rest in expert hands.



Control & Automation

Complete manufacturing solutions

ppcanda.com



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