



Pillarhouse Improves Action Labs' Throughput with Offline Selective Soldering

By George Kennedy, Marketing Assistant, Pillarhouse International, Ltd.

To stand out in the competitive EMS marketplace, Action Labs, a well-known U.S. electronics contract manufacturer of low-volume, high-mix assemblies, has long adhered to three core values: continually upgrading technologies, streamlining processes and improving overall quality.

To meet these three needs, Action Labs collaborated with U.K.-based selective soldering equipment manufacturer Pillarhouse International. Action Labs' investment in Pillarhouse's advanced Jade Pro Duplex design is now helping it to expand current production capacities.

According to Action Labs, the high level of process control, combined with flexibility and high throughput of the platform were the key differentiating factors in the choice of the Jade Pro.

Evolving Technology

The Pillarhouse Jade Pro and its enhanced features allow Action Labs to provide customers with the latest state-of-the-art products,

while handling different solder alloys on the same platform, due to its dual-bath feature. Action Labs made this strategic decision to invest, based on positive experience with their existing Pillarhouse equipment and a desire to increase their production capabilities.



Pillarhouse Jade Pro offline selective solder system.

Since the company's inception in 1963 it has maintained a reputation for building complex and highly functioning PCBs quickly and economically. Prior to this new acquisition, Action Labs used a Pillarhouse Jade Mk II selective solder system for its through-hole lead-free requirements, and a tradi-

tional wave soldering machine to handle all lead-based solder.

As all companies look to navigate the pandemic and the subsequent challenges facing the manufacturing sector and its supply chain, now more than ever efficient solutions such as Pillarhouse's Jade Pro have been so crucial.

With Action Labs' specialty being highly complex assemblies, its focus for the next selective soldering machine was to enhance ease and speed of programming, along with advanced process aids.

"We had an all-lead based production system and we needed to find an alternative method, enabling us to do more lead-free production," says Tom Thompson, VP of operations, Action Labs. "That's why we opted for Pillarhouse's Jade Pro. The top-side and bottom-side heating capabilities were an important factor for us."

After establishing a long and fruitful relationship with Pillarhouse, Action Labs was keen to choose them to provide a selective soldering solution.

“We have a great relationship with Pillarhouse, particularly with their Minnesota representative, Omni-Tronics,” explains Thompson. “We are very satisfied with the equipment and support, since installing their systems and have only had very good overall results. The Pillarhouse selective soldering system is the fastest and easiest product for programming and changeover, due to its compact footprint and flexibility.”

Further Growth

The challenge for Action Labs, as it is with many companies in the crowded EMS market, is the need to move to more-efficient, lead-free processes. With the company processing PCBs with ever-increasing layers and complexity, the process features of Pillarhouse systems have

been shown to have a significant impact on Action Labs’ improved and increased production.

In particular, the enhanced pre-heating capabilities of Pillarhouse’s Jade Pro and the Jetwave option have been integral to Action Labs’ continued output and success. These attributes allow the company to produce in a more structured and precise way, saving time and boosting effectiveness across the company.

Benefits of Selective Soldering

As a result of this investment in selective soldering technology, Action Labs has seen a steady increase in demand for its lead-free, through-hole assemblies. While the company has maintained its lead-based wave solder for a range of customers and products, the new selective soldering system from Pillar-

house has allowed it to competitively handle the increased demand in lead-free assemblies, without the investment or floorspace it would take to adjust its existing wave soldering equipment.

“All software can be challenging at times, but overall Pillarhouse’s systems are relatively easier to program, and there’s no doubt the machines and system work well,” concludes Thompson. “We are very satisfied with our partnership with Pillarhouse going forward.”

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