

The multi-million Bet: How We Automated a Maize Giant During Lockdown

In 2020, while the world stopped, we started designing.

The Context:

Eendag Meule (Bothaville) processes 500,000 tons of maize annually. They are the "Maize Capital" heavyweights. But they had a vulnerability: 4 manual packing lines that were susceptible to the annual labour issues that plague South African production.

The Challenge (The Looming Slide):

The owner, Mr. Martin van Deventer, needed a "Turnkey" solution. He needed one neck to wring—a single supplier accountable for everything from the bag placer to the wrapped pallet.

Initially, **Mechaneer** wasn't even on the list. Why? Because the market believed only European imports could handle a "Full Turnkey" automation project of this scale.

The "Walter Röhl" Moment:

During a meeting to *buy back* old equipment, we realized the client was about to buy imported tech that required overseas specialists to maintain.

We told him: *"We are finishing a design for a bag placer that handles 5kg to 80kg on a single platform. Something no Euro-machine can do."*

We didn't have the machine built yet. We had the researched concept and the "schooling" from past failures. We stuck our necks out and asked him to act on faith.

Ten days later, the deposit was in the bank. We were on the chopping block if we failed.

The Solution (The Intervention):

We developed what we call **"Non-Eurocentric" Tech.**

- **Robust:** Designed for the harsh realities of the SA grid and environment.
- **Maintainable:** "Almost analogue" logic that local technicians can service in-house without a plane ticket from Germany.

- **Versatile:** A single embodiment machine that handles their entire product range (5kg–80kg).
- **World First:** The only machine capable of converting back to manual packing, should the need arise while waiting for parts out in Africa

The Results (The Finish Line):

Four years later, the #2 models are still running 24/7.

- **Strike-Proof:** Labour strikes no longer cripple the facility.
- **Efficiency:** Stock moves from the mill directly onto trucks, reducing massive storage overheads.
- **The Verdict:** Mr. van Deventer's feedback? *"These are some of the best machines I have ever seen."*

The Lesson:

In 2016, we learned a painful lesson at a lime mine about not being prepared for "unspoken" regulations. It cost us dearly. We used that pain to ensure that when we walked into Eendag Meule, we weren't just bringing a machine—we were bringing a solution that was ready for the "cricket match" even if we were told it was "baseball".

Simple. Robust. Reliable. That's Mechaneer'd.

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