



The New Industrial Districts

Adriano Antonelli

IBIX S.r.l. - DIVISIONE TECNOC SUPPLY, Santa Maria in Fabriago (RA), Italy ✉ adriano.antonelli@tecnosupply.com

ately, there has been much debate about international competition: how can the market affect the domestic production process? How can we face the new challenges that await us? Economic recovery seemed sustained, but it is currently weakening also due to political choices that hinder the free movement of goods. So, how can we face the new international economic policies and unilateral choices, such as those concerning the heavy duties imposed by the USA on Europe? Whereas Germany has a fabric of stable companies in terms of both finance and production, Italy has always been the country of small businesses. Of course, we are not referring to micro or nano companies, which nowadays tend to have more and more problems because of their difficulty to adapt to the now unavoidable insourcing trend. Here, we are talking about the small but reliable companies that have managed to cope with the challenges of the global market despite not having the structure and size of many of their European competitors. Traditionally, in Italy, the creation of Production Districts was the answer. We all know, for example, the Ceramic District of Modena, the Eyewear

District of Belluno, and the Pharmaceutical District of the Lazio region. But how has the District concept changed in the last few years of economic challenges? Production Districts have certainly transformed. The skills needed to sell goods globally are increasingly complex and challenging. It may even happen that the ones required are not available in one's own jealously guarded stronghold of knowledge, which until a few decades ago was one of the most precious assets for a small business.

Just think that, in order to maintain its sales levels, the goods produced by an Italian company have to travel an average of 400 km more than just ten years ago. The answer, therefore, are no longer districts, but rather expansion. The supply chain that brings products beyond the borders can now be distributed throughout the national territory, in various specialised industrial areas. This system creates a network of companies that are able to maintain high quality standards and low prices.

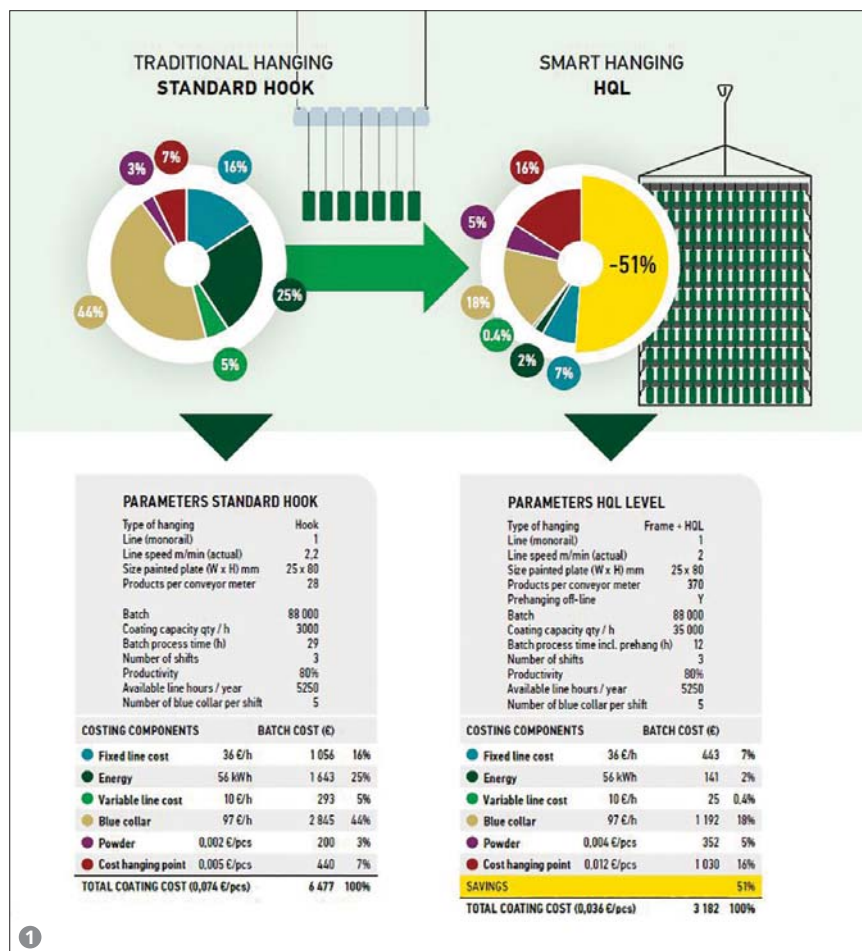


Figure 1: Optimising the hanging phase can bring huge benefits in terms of time and cost savings.

The coating of mechanical parts and components is certainly an important part of the Italian productive fabric, as well as an important process in terms of both product protection and packaging. Coating is now a key factor also for highly technological products. For any firm needing to coat in a short time and on workpieces subject to unilateral changes in terms of shape and size, being always prepared can be complicated and expensive. Increasing production density should be the primary goal. The pictures presented can help understand how a few changes in the hanging method used can ensure great benefits in terms of time and cost savings (Fig. 1). Switching from individual



Figure 2: The HQC hanging system, featuring a bar holder with a silicone protection.

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hooks to structured and flexible frames (in order to avoid an exponential increase in the number of frames required) can immediately bring significant improvements. The devices described below, such as HQL, HQC, and HQS, have costs comparable to those of individual hooks, but ensure an advantage in terms of hanging speed, production density, and unloading operations.

The following innovations by HangOn can help make the right decision about the best coating method. A recently presented innovative solution are the ready-made hanging bars HQC, an evolution of HQL bars. The harmonic steel hooks are already inserted on the bar and ready to use. The bar is then located on

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Figure 3: The HQS hanging system (left) compared with an individual hanging solution.



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ANTARES S.r.l.

Via F.lli Cervi 12/B - 37036
San Martino Buon Albergo (Vr)
ITALY

T. +39 045 8780567

F. +39 045 994606

email: info@anteresitaly.net

WWW.ANTERESITALY.NET

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a BH R58 bar holder, welded on a 10 mm hook (Fig. 2). The silicone protection ensures free conductivity. The bar has been designed to be produced entirely automatically and it can be used for a large quantity of parts, thus proving extremely economic. Its cost is around 2 Euros per bar. Moreover, it is possible to insert a series of hooks in the bar holder to hang medium-sized workpieces, since the central hook has a 10 mm diameter.

Another tree frame manufactured automatically and therefore costing less than 2 Euros/bar is called HQS (Fig. 3). It features metal sheets enabling to hang individual parts, up to profiles. The 4 or 5 mm central hook ensures a total frame capacity up to 100 kg. HQS has been recently launched on the market with various types of hooks, enabling each

customer to create the most suitable configuration for its specific needs. The tree can be up to 2400 mm in length, while the sheets are 1.0 mm thick and 18 mm high. It is possible to create different configurations: sheets on one side only (i.e. sheared), zigzag-shaped, or bent from 0 to 180°.



Figure 4: The HQL hanging system.

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The HQL bar, finally, has been in the catalogue for some years now (Fig. 4). It can be integrated on the universal frames. The 1 mm hook leaves only a slight mark on the coated part. Also for this bar range, Ibis has launched a triple V-shaped bar preventing the workpieces to unhook during pre-cleaning.

As we all know, however, not only simple workpieces need to be hung. Sometimes, it is necessary to hang and mask the parts at the same time. And the only hanging point available can be,

for example, a pivot. For these cases, HangOn has created the GHA accessory, compatible with the HCL BHL bar that can house it internally (Fig. 5). This enables to mask and hang parts with one simple operation. The cap features grooves that do not hinder the conductivity of metal. ○



Figure 5: The special GHA Style, masking and hanging system.