

# UNEX CASE STUDY

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— John Wall, Production Control Assistant Manager, Toyotetsu



**customer: TOYOTETSU**

**operation: Manufacturing of metal frame parts for Toyota automobiles**

**goal: Gain space, increase storage density and move components efficiently**

**solution: Flow Rack systems from UNEX**



## More Storage, More Space

**UNEX flow racks clear the path for growth and efficiency at a thriving automobile plant in Canada.**

*At the Toyotetsu plant in Simcoe, Ontario, workers stamp the metal frame parts for cars such as the RAV4, Corolla and Lexus.*

“Our business is projected to grow considerably in the next 2 years,” says Andy Elkin, Production Control Manager. “We’re anticipating a two-fold increase in the number of parts Toyota wants us to build and volume increases for certain models, and that means we need to use our space as efficiently as possible.”

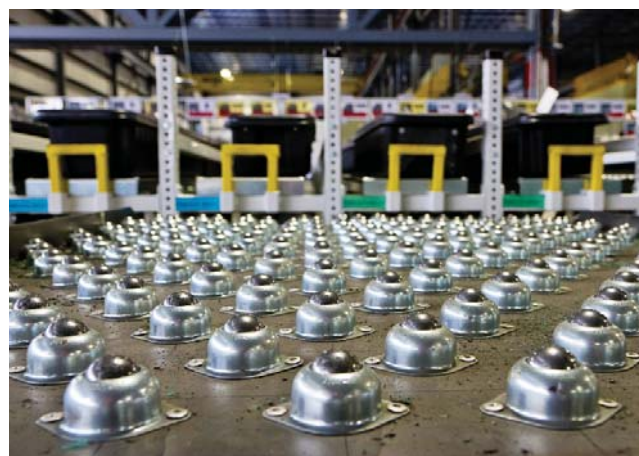
### A Peek inside the Plant

At Toyotetsu, components are stored in plastic boxes or hand totes, depending on weight and size. Operators drive tuggers down aisles to find and pick parts, place them on carts and deliver them to the welding area.

In August 2011, Andy and his team recognized that Toyota’s projected growth would result in a tight squeeze for the existing tugging zone. Some flow racks had been used since the plant opened in 2007, “but we knew we needed a complete UNEX system to save space and increase storage density for components,” says Andy.

### Room to Grow

According to UNEX distributor Brian Pollock, President of Northstar Industries, UNEX met with the Toyotetsu team and custom-designed a flow rack system that eliminated an entire tugging aisle by increasing storage density, doubled the length of the racks, tightened up spaces between roller chutes, and integrated the new flow rack system with an existing one.



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John Wall, Production Control Assistant Manager for Toyotetsu, says the new flow rack system gave the plant 10% more floor space. “Plus, a lot of that racking became a bi-level storage area, which means we saved even more space. Overall, we gained enough extra storage to accommodate a 30% increase in business.”

**The Kaizen Mindset**

Kaizen, or continuous improvement, is the norm for many Japanese-owned facilities, and Toyotetsu is no exception.

“The roller racks from UNEX are made of portable material, and they are easy for our staff to take apart, reconfigure and put together,” says Andy. “This allows us to make continuous, incremental improvements to our storage systems as our business evolves. It also allows us to maintain the Toyota production system: running small batch sizes and frequent production lots.”

**No Speed Bumps**

Keeping things moving without interruption on the plant floor is more important than ever, considering the expected growth ahead. Tugging tractors work on a 30-minute cycle, so team members must get into the pick area, identify the parts they need, get those components on the cart and move them to the welding area as quickly, safely and accurately as possible.

“The UNEX racking provides a designated storage area for every part, and bins are clearly marked with key product characteristics,” says Andy. “Team members are able to find what they need and keep the job moving forward.”

John adds that when people come into the plant, “they see a clean, orderly system, and that’s very important for our facility.”

**The Right Partner in the Driver’s Seat**

Brian from Northstar Industries says collaboration between his company, UNEX and Toyotetsu was remarkable. “We created prototypes and tested the product flow to make sure the designs worked well and the product was excellent,” he says. “This was a situation where teamwork was strong throughout the entire process.”

Andy agrees. “UNEX took an off-the-shelf system, customized it and made it work with another system. We decided to use our staff to install the flow racks, and UNEX provided the training and stayed in close contact throughout the installation. This was a good partnership.”



**Flow Rack Benefits for Toyotetsu**

- Increased storage space
- Fewer aisles for tuggers to maneuver
- Increased accuracy and speed of pick time
- Easy handling and installation of material
- Integrated with existing materials



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