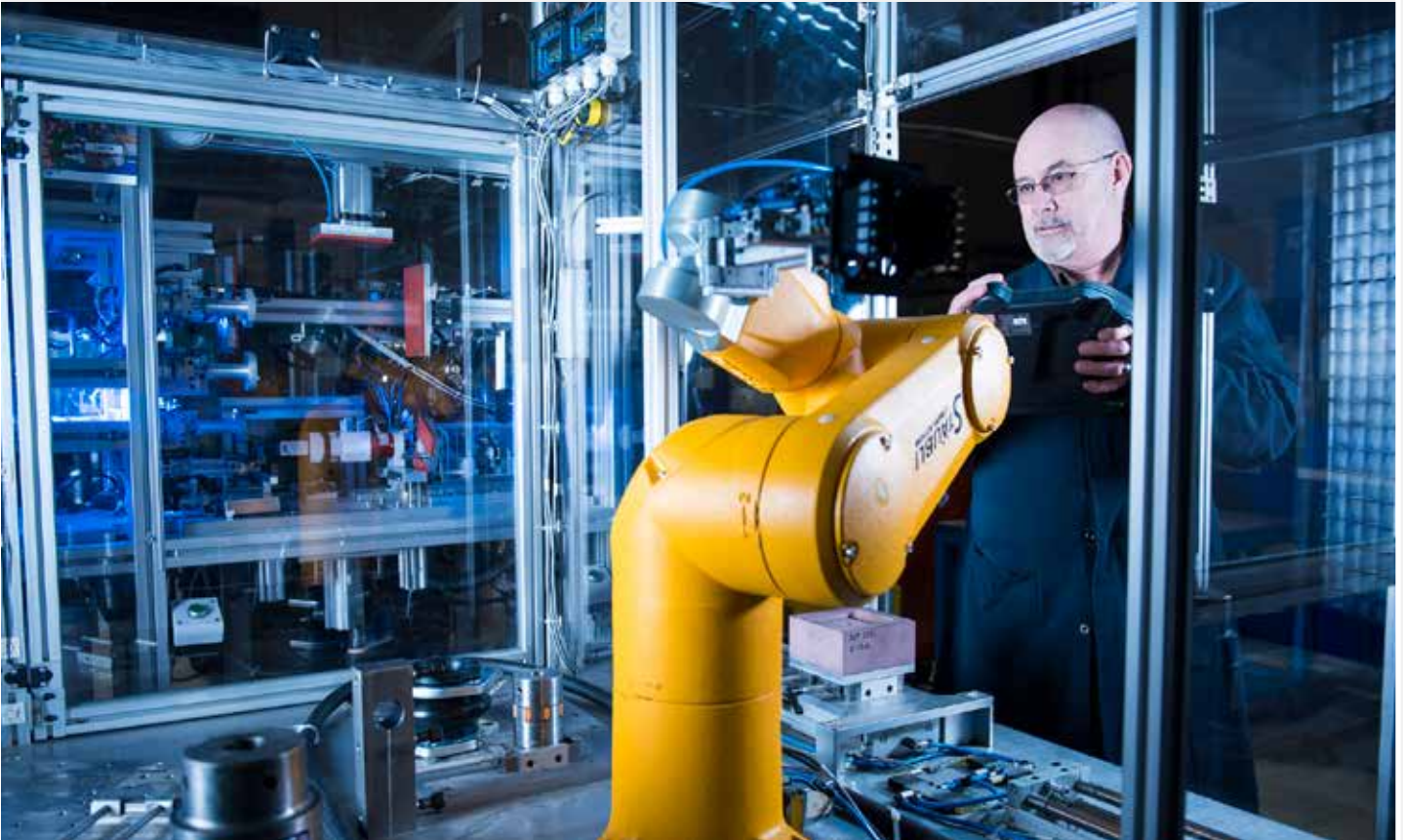


CASE STUDY: COLUMBIA PLASTICS EMBRACES AUTOMATION TO REALIZE NEW MARKETS



As a long term tenant in the community, Columbia Plastics has been in operation in Cloverdale since 1981. Originally focusing on plastics for office supplies, Columbia Plastics examined market trends and noticed a demand for high end plastics for medical devices. They saw first-hand the effect automation was having in their industry and how companies relying on manual labour were now competing with cheaper labour options abroad. Columbia Plastics embraced a pilot program to explore automation opportunities not just in office supplies, but in other high return industries, such as medical devices, agriculture, and mining.

While in some cases automation did not necessarily result in more units being produced, it did lead to less variability in the product, improving quality, which led to bigger contracts with higher quality manufacturers. Further, even making small changes in production to menial jobs helped improve morale, created a safer working environment and led to new higher skill jobs. In some cases, revenues for certain products increased by 30% which enabled Columbia Plastics to hire more high skilled technicians and engineers and identify new opportunities for automation.

“ Businesses need to think about how they will modernize and innovate; it’s looking at flexibility and analyzing where and when. A lot of what we bring in needs to be flexible and able to work on more than one job – even jobs we don’t know about yet. ”

– Brian Holmes, V.P and General Manager, Columbia Plastics Ltd.