

# Hänel Case Study



## Stiles Machinery



When your parts department stocks over \$32 million of inventory and ships in excess of 50,000 orders every year, you can't rely on anything less than the most reliable and productive storage and retrieval system available.



For Stiles Machinery Inc., the world's largest independent distributor of CNC equipment for processing wood, plastic, glass, and stone, the only choice was Hänel Storage Systems.

Stiles maintains a database of 100,000 parts, maintained by an automated inventory system. All parts are photographed and bar-coded to make identification fast and accurate. Thousands of those parts, ranging from the tiniest bolt to the largest electric drive motor, are stored within a bank of Hänel Lean-Lift VLMs that is the heart of their 24-hour parts distribution center.

In a normal day, Stiles pulls about 30 orders per hour, but on busy days that number may jump to as many as 100 orders per hour. The parts department was staffed for these busy period, resulting in excess labor capacity most other times. Cutoff times had to be imposed and orders had to be prioritized, with lower priority orders not being shipped same day.

**Location**  
Grand Rapids, MI

**Category**  
Distribution

**Product**  
Lean-Lift

**Website**  
[stilesmachinery.com/parts](http://stilesmachinery.com/parts)



*The system saved us approximately \$180K the first year."*

**-Dave Troeter  
National Parts Manager**



*Parts large and small are quickly accessed.*

With the automation provided by the Hänel lifts, Stiles can process in excess of 100 orders per hour, with fewer people. All orders, regardless of priority go out same day because the average time to pull an order has dropped to less than 5 minutes. By reducing staffing levels by 50%, annual savings were well over \$150,000 with an improvement to customer service!



Stiles also realized other, unforeseen benefits after switching to Hänel. With the added ability to cross-check inventory within the units against their corporate parts management system, Stiles gained unprecedented visibility of their inventory.

The Hänel units track inventory when physically added or removed from the machines, while the corporate system tracks parts arriving at receiving and departing at shipping. The two systems compare notes at the end of each day, and send management an e-mail with any discrepancies. While these discrepancies happened before the move to Hänel, they are much easier to spot and to correct than before.

The cross-checking helps to eliminate four of the most common issues faced by distributors:

1. **Mislabeled Parts from Vendor.**  
An excess of one part number and a shortage of another flags mislabeled parts. A quick visual audit will identify and allow correction of the issue.
2. **Parts Misidentified at Receiving**  
If stock appears in the Hänel units that does not match the system inventory, those items are misidentified and can be easily identified for correction.
3. **Incorrect Count in Either Inventory**  
The Hänel units provide a second count to compare against the system inventory, and will also flag discrepancies from pulling too few or too many parts.
4. **Incorrect Count in Both Systems**  
Random cycle counts provide a double-check to verify inventory is correct in both systems.

Hänel units always display the on-hand count every time a container is delivered to give the operator a quick reference of what “should” be on hand and allowing issues to be quickly corrected.



Hänel Lean-Lifts are also much more secure than open shelving. Password-restricted access to the machines is an option, but Stiles found that people not authorized on the machines would not attempt to remove items themselves. The touchscreen interface, while simple to understand with minimal training, kept away any untrained users.

The units are also closed and locked at night, preventing personnel from removing items overnight or on weekends. While their intentions were usually to assist a customer in need, forgetting to fill out the required paperwork removed inventory that was never billed for. The reduction in gain/loss fluctuation saved approximately \$180,000 the first year!

To learn more about Stiles and see their Lean-Lifts in action, check out these videos on the Stiles YouTube Channel:

*“Taking Care of Business:  
An Overview of Stiles  
Support Services”*



*“World Class Machines  
& So Much More “*

