

Customer story

The Lantech technology behind the success of Dutch marketing fulfilment company Sidekix

How Sidekix ships millions of Tony's Chocolonely bars every year using Lantech's new Tray Erector and Lid Applicator technology.



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Introduction

Dutch marketing fulfilment company Sidekix specialises in executing large consumer marketing campaigns. Over the past few years, Sidekix has experienced a major growth. The company has obtained new clients, a growing workforce and handles increased product volumes for shipping. To keep up with that growth, Sidekix has invested heavily in smart machine handling.

“We realise tens of millions of contact moments a year for our clients, for example, we package and ship millions of chocolate bars for the Dutch National Lottery every year. We always look for new opportunities to make our processes as efficient as possible and continuously invest in automated and mechanical solutions,” says Jochum Boeijen, Manager Operations at Sidekix. We sat down with Jochum to discuss how Lantech’s new TE/LA technology contributed to a recent logistics project at Sidekix.”



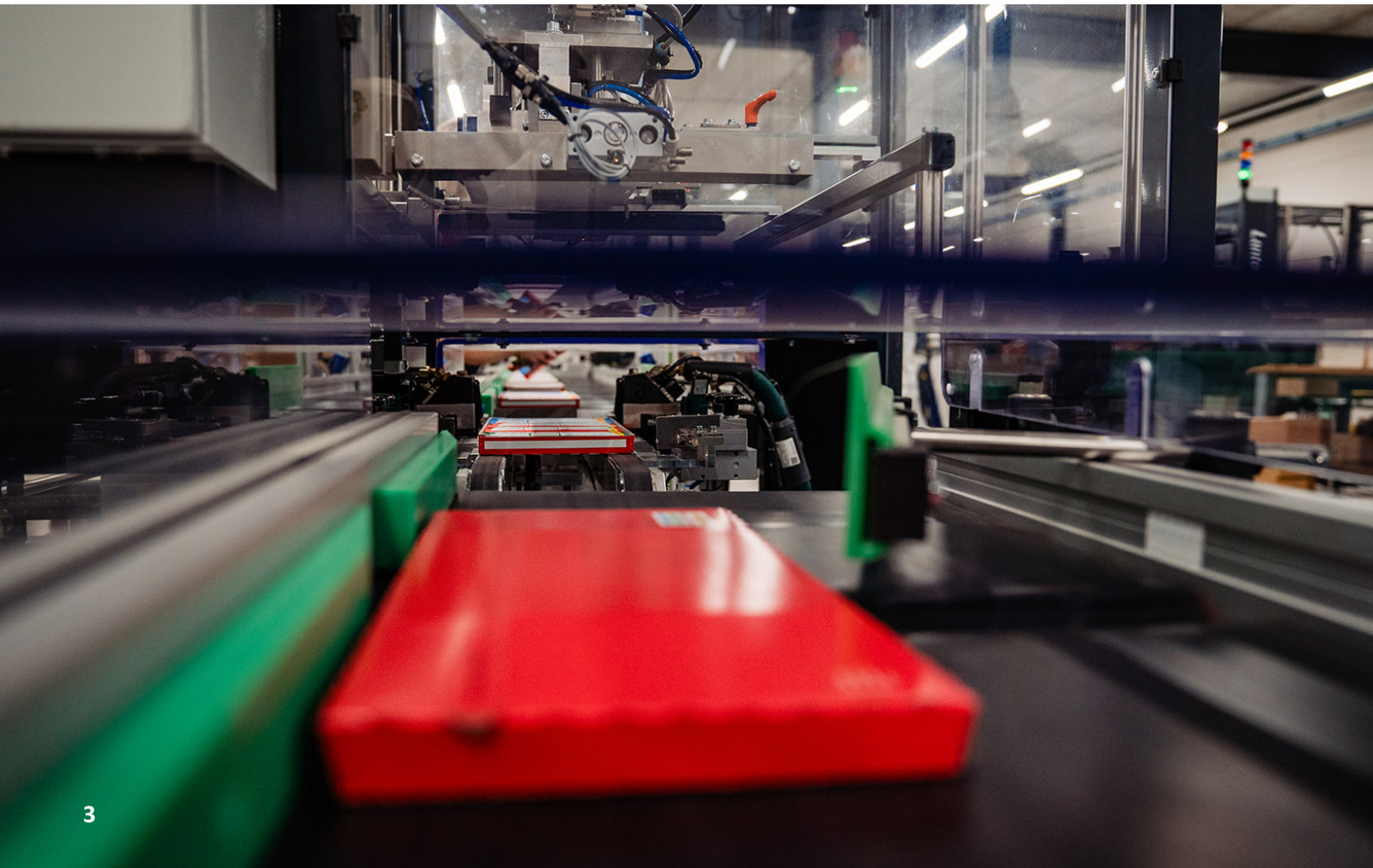
Who are Sidekix and what is your core business?

“There are many disciplines involved in the operational execution of a marketing campaign. Sidekix provides full direction, production and physical distribution of such a campaign. From storing, packaging and shipping physical and digital products, direct mailings and e-mailings, building campaign sites and online flows to (digital) customer service. Whether it’s winning campaigns, loyalty programmes, product-plus promotions, retail promotions, large activation campaigns or the complete logistics of online orders, Sidekix takes care of it all.”

“When it comes to physical products, we manage product stock, do the order picking, pack orders and deliver packages to carriers such as PostNL. So we are there for the customer from A to Z, a ‘one-stop shop’ really.”

“The client comes up with the campaign and we are his right-hand man, his sidekick, ensuring perfect execution. We do not easily say no to our clients, but together we look at whether and how we can still meet a difficult challenge. Because what we promise, we really want to deliver.”

“Hence, we always focus on long-term cooperation with our customers, precisely to develop new and smart solutions together. We see ourselves not only as a supplier of logistics services, but also as a sparring partner and right-hand man. Daring to invest in new technologies and applications is in our DNA.”



What were the logistical bottlenecks that Lantech helped you with and why did these bottlenecks need to be resolved?

“One of the bottlenecks is the large fluctuation in order volumes. Periods of huge workload regularly alternate with quieter periods. For us, this means we have to ramp up and down a lot with temporary or seasonal workers. The scarcity of the workforce makes this especially difficult to manage. So we started to invest in new technologies and more user-friendly machines. So that we become less dependent on the flexibility and availability of temporary workers and can better respond to the peaks and troughs in the production process. With the added advantage that highly automated work processes are less error-prone compared to manual work.”

“Earlier, we recognised the benefit of packing and shipping in letterbox format. For example, a long-standing project is packaging and preparing Tony’s Chocolonely chocolate bars for participants of the Dutch National Postcode Lottery. Players who participate with multiple lots and win will receive a proportional number of chocolate bars. The challenge was therefore how to efficiently pack and ship both single bars and a multitude of bars in one flow. Loose bars, up to a maximum of two bars, can be packed and sent in an envelope quite easily, with more bars it becomes a lot more difficult.”

“We quickly saw that a standardised postal package, large enough to accommodate several bars and that would easily fit through the letterbox, could remove many bottlenecks.”

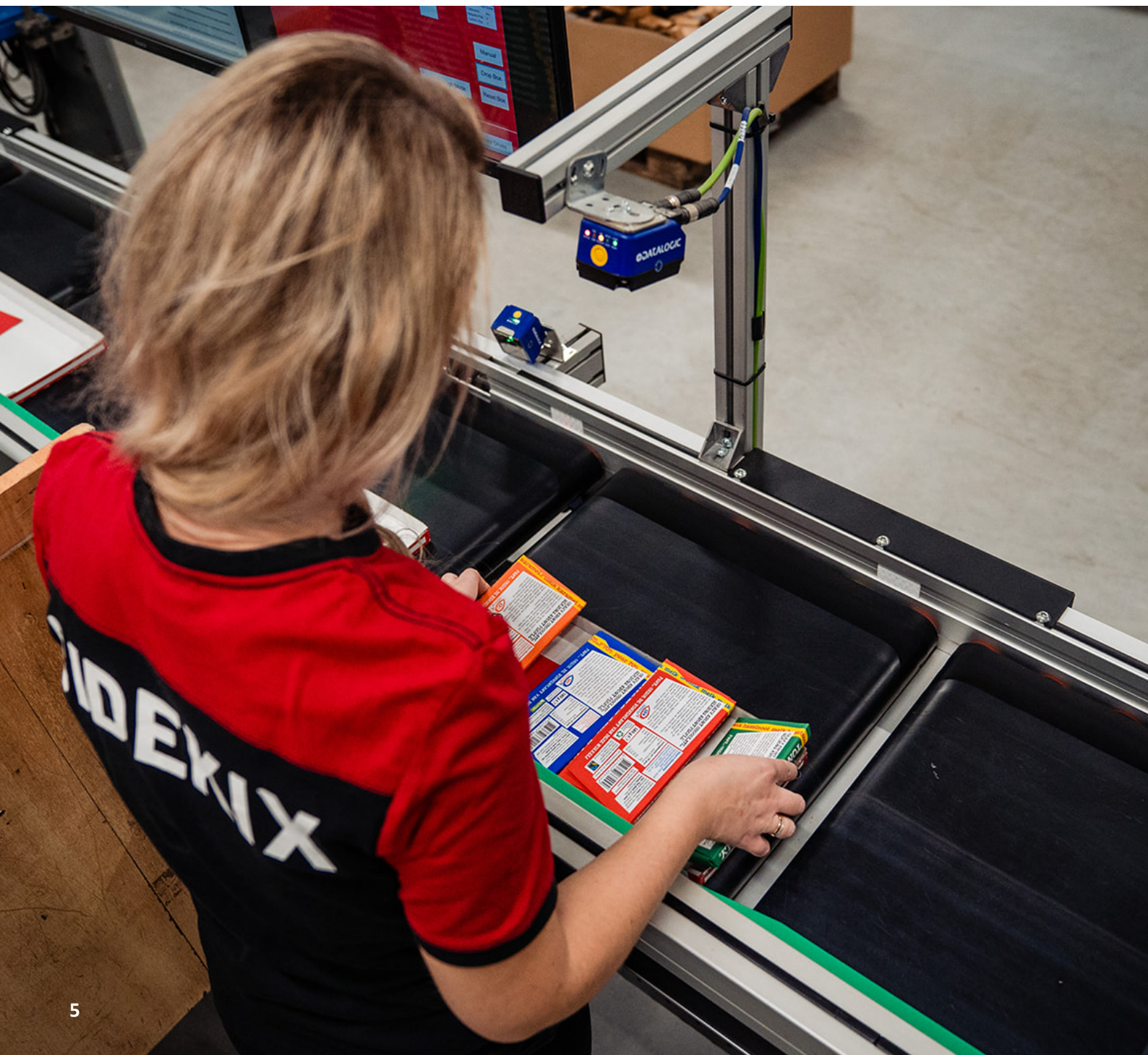
“By using a standard letterbox package, we solve two problems at once: letterbox packages can be delivered on time and bundled, and we facilitate more efficient handling in the warehouse. With the Lantech Parcel Tray Erector and Lid Applicator, we can now pack four chocolate bars in one letterbox package.

“That’s a lot more customer-friendly and sustainable than four separate envelopes with one bar each. An additional benefit is that packaging and transport costs are significantly lower for the supplier.”

How did you end up at Lantech?

“Salex Systeemtechniek, our sparring partner on early adopter projects, linked us to Lantech. We were excited that Lantech could offer the right packaging solution and is based in the Netherlands, so we can get direct support when needed. Lantech helped us a lot in that. And on top of that, Lantech delivers excellent quality.”

“With the Lantech Tray Erector and Lid Applicator, we can now pack four chocolate bars in one letterbox package.”



Have you considered any (other) solutions?

“We also considered other machines, but we were soon convinced that we needed a machine that has a tray erector and which applies a lid after the tray is packed. And then you start looking at whether these machines can be integrated into a compact packaging line and linked to our software. So we were looking for an all-round solution.”

“Before we came to Lantech, one of the things we looked at was a cartonwrap machine that allows you to create a fully customised package for shipping. But those packages have a greater size tolerance.”

“This may result in them not always meeting the maximum requirements for a letterbox and thus having to be presented at the door as a bell item. And that in turn leads to higher delivery costs, more returns and longer waiting times for the recipient.”



How much labour have you saved on the packaging line?

“In the end, we went down from twenty workers to three permanent colleagues and the turnaround time was reduced from 14 to 8 days. A hefty saving in cost and time. What is more, we now have a permanent team of trained employees who know exactly how to operate and set up the machines.”

“This increases the level of engagement. We also see that people really feel responsible for ensuring that the production process runs smoothly, which is good to see. That is nice to see. An asset not to be underestimated; the focus, alertness and commitment of your workforce to the equipment they work with.”

Are fewer deliveries being returned now than before?

“Yes, we have seen a significant improvement. A major advantage of standardised packaging is that it reduces your error margins. In the past, we sometimes had discussions with our courier about the size and measurements of the packages.”

“Sometimes, parcels were even returned because they would not meet certain requirements. Now that we work with fully standardised letterbox packages with exactly the same size and packaging quality, we have solved this problem. That too saves a lot of time...and returns.”

“Whereas previously we needed 14 days to manually pack with 20 workers, we now easily achieve this in 8 days with 3 permanent workers.”

What is the added value for your customers?

“The introduction of letterbox parcels has reduced shipping costs for our customers. Moreover, the packages look a lot nicer and are less prone to damage. In the process, logistics handling such as stacking parcels runs a lot smoother.”

“The contents may vary from package to package, but the package format remains the same. This allows more parcels to fit into one delivery, which in turn saves on transport costs and reduces CO2 emissions.”

Do you have any other packaging challenges?

“We are currently looking at ways to pack multiple products of different sizes in one box. Thus, we will build smart solutions so that we can pack multiple order types more efficiently and therefore cheaper, and ship them damage-free.”

“It is important to us on both sides that we emit as little CO2 as possible, do not use single-use plastic and waste as little packaging as possible. This is how we want to design our e-fulfilment processes as much as possible.”

“Another challenge has to do with sustainability. Of course, we comply with environmental laws and regulations, but we like to go a step further. Like us, our customers are environmentally conscious about their purchases.”



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Has this automation project yielded any additional benefits?

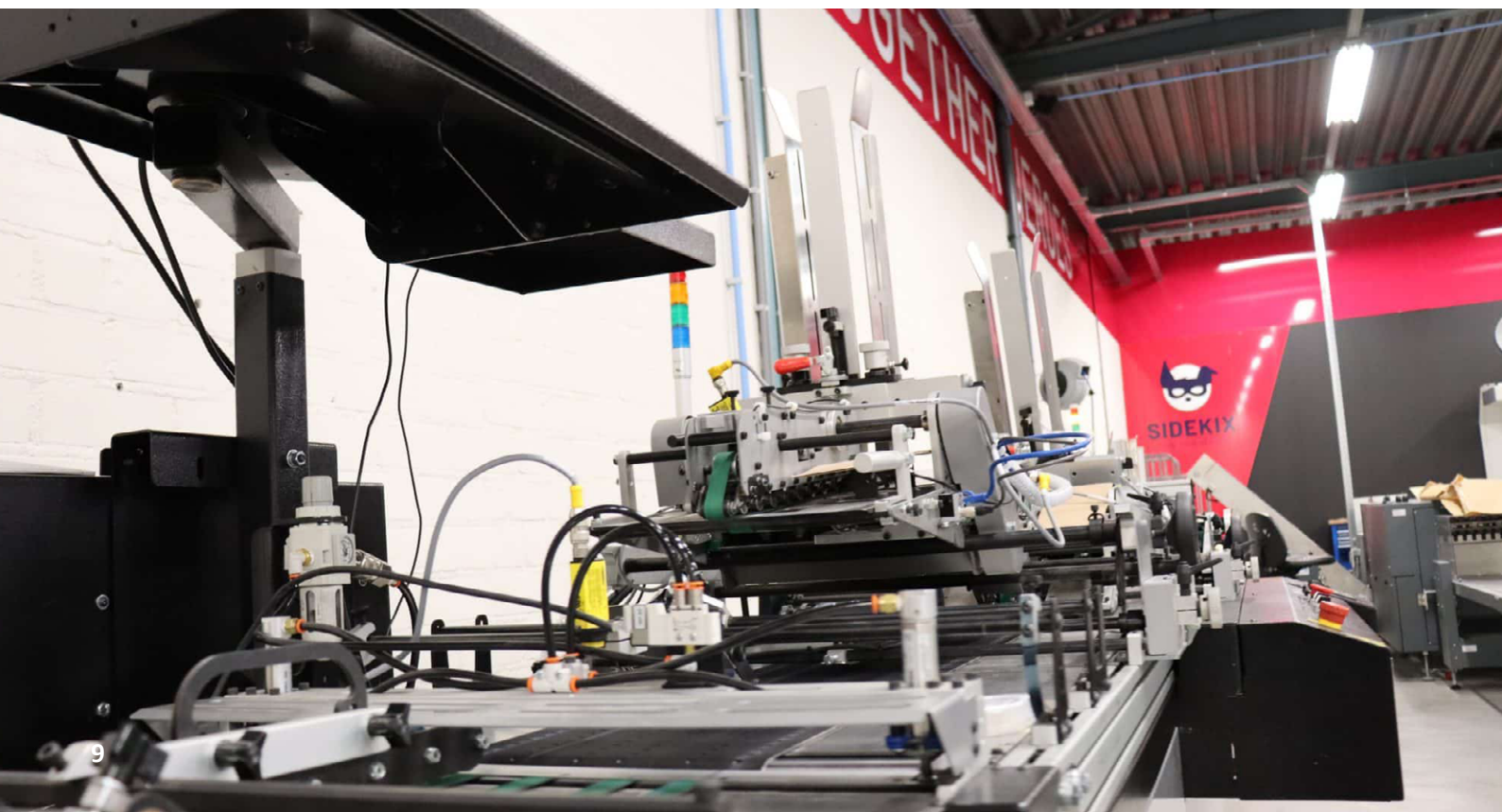
“What is nice to see is that not only me, but also our workers on the floor have become fans of the Lantech machines. With the move from manual packing to machine operator, they have a responsible job to do.”

“And they also take that task seriously. They see it as a challenge to make the automated packaging process fast, safe and fault-free.”

What did you learn from this project?

“Make sure you work with a partner who can integrate all the different systems with each other. And also make good arrangements for support beforehand. Something unexpected can always happen to the machines and a good service team must be on standby quickly. Failures cannot always be ruled out and downtime or delays in the production process cost a lot of money.”

“Another learning point was to standardise the types of glue we use on the different packaging lines to seal cardboard packaging. In the past, this was not always keenly observed and sometimes the wrong type of glue was used with a particular machine. Now we have become much smarter and less prone to these types of errors.”



What are your plans for the future?

“We want to keep growing and are constantly looking for smart solutions and new ways to work more efficient and faster. For example, we want to automate the feeding of products to the machines so that products no longer have to be pre-packed by hand. The idea is to provide all products with an EAN code that the machine can read directly to determine which label to create for which package.”

“In the output line, we also aim to be more precise, weighing all finished products and recording them on imagery before they leave our company. This avoids incorrect shipments going out the door as much as possible and we have more information available in case of complaints afterwards. Plenty of plans for the future!”



About Lantech

Lantech is globally recognized as a market leader in stretch wrapping technology and robust and efficient machines for processing cases. Our mission is to drastically reduce the billions of dollars in damage that occurs during transport. We aim to ensure that products arrive at their destination in their original, perfect condition. For more information about the various models of case erectors, please visit our website.

For more information about the different models of case erectors, [request a quote](#).

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