



Best Innovation of an Existing Product

WINNER: Ancra Systems BV—Enhanced Skateloader Automatically Loads Standard Trailers with Pre-Stage Palletized or Slip-Sheeted Goods in One Shot

Having pioneered automatic one-shot loading solutions for trucks, trailers and shipping containers in Europe three decades ago, MHI member Ancra Systems has never grown complacent. Instead, the company has continued to develop, engineer and refine its technology to meet the evolving needs of its customers and outbound loading docks worldwide.

Ancra Systems won the Best Innovation of an Existing Product with the newest version of its Skateloader. The fully



automated system still transfers a pre-staged collection of unit loads directly into an unmodified truck, trailer or container. What's new, explained Jack Smylie, North American sales manager, is the machine's ability to handle either palletized or slip-sheeted loads—or both at the same time.

"While our systems had been handling pallets, we recognized that many of our customers also ship their products on slip sheets," he said. "That prompted our engineers to develop a design that could handle either type of unit load, or both."

Because the system inserts the entire shipment in a single pass with no operator or manual intervention required, a tremendous amount of time is saved at the dock. When compared to traditional forklift-based loading of pallet or slip-sheet unit loads, the Skateloader system reduces the total cycle time from roughly 30 minutes to as little as 7 minutes, Smylie said. "That allows a single dock door to handle up to five full trailers per hour—significantly increasing dock utilization and boosting efficiency."

The system is equipped with numerous scanners and other sensors to detect the positioning of the trailer opening at the dock door. That information is used to automatically adjust the Skateloader's alignment to match, avoiding impacts and precisely placing the load into the container. Once the machine retracts to its start position, the next batch of pallet and slipsheeted loads can be staged onto its loading platform for insertion into the subsequent vehicle.

"It's ideal for distribution centers shipping high volumes of outbound, mixed product loads," Smylie continued, noting that in addition to reducing truck turnaround time, the automated system creates a safer work environment for both employees and products. "It cuts labor and equipment costs while simultaneously improving worker ergonomics and eliminating product, dock and trailer damage due to accidental forklift impacts."

Each Skateloader system is custom designed for the facility and application. Today, more than 1,000 versions are in use across a broad range of industries including food, beverage, pharmaceuticals, even solar panels. Because of how quickly a Skateloader can load a truck—paired with its ability to function in temperatures as low as 5° Fahrenheit (-15° Celsius)—the company has deployed several of them into automated cold storage distribution centers. However, Ancra Systems can seamlessly integrate the technology into any automated production or warehouse system, Smylie concluded.

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MHI Annual Industry Report: *Evolution to Revolution: Building the Supply Chains of Tomorrow* during a panel discussion with four industry thought leaders. The report details the revolutionary adoption of supply chain technology that is predicted to make operations more responsive and agile amid ongoing disruptions. The report can be downloaded at mhi.org/publications/report.

The March 30 afternoon keynote featured Shaquille O'Neal, who delighted the audience with tales of his storied basketball and business career. Overall, the MODEX educational conference session attendance was 13,524.

Industry Night with comedian Preacher Lawson was an exciting and entertaining evening. Five thousand dollars in proceeds from the event were donated to Atlanta's Habitat for Humanity and \$40,000 was donated to the Material Handling Education Foundation to fund scholarships and programs for students and educators in our industry.

During this event, MHI announced the winners of the 2022 MHI Innovation Awards during MODEX. The MHI Innovation Awards serve to educate and provide valuable insights on the latest manufacturing and supply chain innovative products and services. The awards had 121 submissions from MODEX 2022 exhibitors, and the winners were:

- Best New Product: Phantom Auto
- Best IT Innovation: Veryable, Inc.
- Best Innovation of an Existing Product: Ancra Systems BV

Student Day at MODEX introduced 305 high school and university students and educators from 33 schools to career opportunities in material handling, supply chain and logistics through hands-on learning and networking with industry professionals. This year's Student Day combined an interactive educational session with a dynamic guided tour of the MODEX expo.

The next MHI-sponsored trade event will be ProMat 2023 held March 20-23 in Chicago's McCormick Place. For more information on exhibiting at ProMat or to register as an attendee, visit promatshow.com. The next MODEX will be held at the Georgia World Congress Center in 2024. ●



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