



Focused Efforts and Out-of-the-Box Thinking Help Provide Solutions in an Unimaginable Timeline to Help in COVID-19 Response

CASE STUDY



Demand for face masks, particularly N95 respirator masks, dramatically increased as medical professionals and the general population took to protecting themselves from COVID-19. The ATS team was engaged by a familiar customer, but one with a very unique challenge—increase production capacity with new equipment but in a fraction of the typical delivery time.

Challenge

General Motors (GM) launched a rapid response project to produce medical masks at scale to help protect essential services workers. GM had drawings of the mask they wished to produce and only a little more than photographs of existing production equipment. GM's target was to have production capacity in less than 3 weeks' time for 11,000 masks per day and to scale up to at least a production level of 50,000 masks daily. Typically, the time period for design, development and deployment for a non-standard machine is many months to a year.

Solution

GM has a strong relationship with ATS Automation and realized that ATS's automation and life sciences segment experience would be a strong match for this unique challenge. ATS quickly aligned internal resources in sourcing, engineering, and manufacturing. The team rapidly conceptualized a manufacturing line and then began to work with materials from ATS's component inventory. The team also engaged with key supply chain partners to see what was immediately available to help bring the concept to fruition. The system used as many standard components as possible and was practically being built as it was designed.

"Without partners like you, this project would have taken several months to execute, but together the team went from launch to producing a sample in just one week. General Motors is committed to using our manufacturing expertise toward a greater good, and we could not do it without partners like you and your unwavering commitment to helping during this crisis."

— MARY BARRA, CEO, GENERAL MOTORS

Results

First manufacturing line shipped in less than three weeks!

- Saved approximately six months
- Producing an incremental 11,000 masks/day