

# CENTER STAGE

New bundle splitter system is focal point of new service center

BY MODERN METALS STAFF WRITER

**“W**e always wanted this machine and have been talking about it for a long time,” recalls Dave Cohen, chief operating officer at Industrial Metal Supply (IMS), in reference to a new Bundle Splitter for sheet order filling from Canrack Metal Center Systems. The splitter system is now the centerpiece of the IMS branch in Phoenix, Arizona that opened in March 2023.

IMS, with locations in California and Arizona, has been operating in Phoenix for more than twenty years. “We had outgrown our Phoenix location, so we moved a mile and a half away to a brand new, much larger facility that we built specifically for IMS needs,” explains Cohen.

## BUNDLE SPLITTER SYSTEM

Several requirements were established for the new Bundle Splitter system, which has been in operation at IMS Phoenix since March. According to Cohen, the equipment needed to improve surface quality; achieve better through-put and efficiencies; and “significantly reduce the difficult, manual, heavy work associated with metal sheets.” Canrack’s Bundle Splitter system delivers by allowing sheet order filling without any lifting. The system reduces the steps in sheet handling to minimize scratching. And a greater volume of sheets can be managed through this integrated system.

The Canrack Bundle Splitter system has a modular design. “We have seven different versions that can be scalable. Our system

compartmentalizes the sheet order filling process. All steps are contained within one area: loading, picking, strapping, wrapping, unloading and staging for shipment,” says Jason Clark, president of the Toronto, Canada-based manufacturer. The IMS Bundle Splitter includes a tank style conveyor on both ends of the splitter. “These are custom systems—with the splitter and integrated conveyor. We engineer and adapt the design to make it work for each customer order,” says Clark.

The tank style conveyor can handle any type of skid design, compared to a roller style conveyor that requires additional steps for managing wood skids. Canrack’s tank style conveyor relies upon a chain-like tread, unique to Canrack. The manufacturer custom-makes these treads, which—along with other Canrack equipment—are produced in Toronto. The tank style conveyor design eliminates the need for inserts when handling wood skids. “We had a customer handling a lot of non-flat bottom skids, so they installed our tank style conveyors to save time. Their productivity jumped 30 percent and they are filling 100 orders a day,” states Clark. At IMS, the tank style conveyor also allows for final inspection and staging at the Bundle Splitter. “This optimal configuration allows us to achieve efficiency goals moving forward,” anticipates Cohen.

Historically, Canrack has been a supplier of cantilevered racks and storage systems for the steel industry. The company also provides conveyor systems for sheet steel. “There are a lot of storage competitors out there. But not many understand the weight issues, narrow aisles and other nuances of the steel industry.



- A** The IMS Bundle Splitter includes a tank style conveyor on both ends of the splitter.
- B** IMS designed the new Phoenix facility from the ground up, paying careful attention to ergonomics and flow. Employees have ample room to safely move about in a workspace dedicated to the Bundle Splitter system.
- C** Canrack’s tank style conveyor features proprietary chain-like tread.



**“I CAN SEE THE IMPROVED SURFACE QUALITY AND OUR CUSTOMERS ARE GIVING THE PHOENIX BRANCH HIGHER FEEDBACK RATINGS.”**

**DAVE COHEN,**  
INDUSTRIAL METAL SUPPLY

We’ve learned there is no such thing as ‘too heavy.’ And pushing or pulling sheets can damage the surface. We take all that knowledge and focus on supporting metal service centers. This focus has made us really good at what we do,” states Clark.

## MORE ELBOW ROOM

The benefits of designing a new facility from the ground up are careful planning and attention to ergonomics and flow. “We designed into the new space components to make the work life easier for employees. We allowed for more room to safely move about. We now have a clean open dedicated workspace for the Bundle Splitter system—no longer sharing workspace with inventory storage,” explains Cohen.

It’s a little early to measure all the metrics on the new Bundle Splitter system. “I can report that since the new Canrack equipment was installed, our safety performance has been very good,” says Cohen, referring to an already strong metric. “I can see the improved surface quality and our customers are giving the Phoenix branch higher feedback ratings on quality,” he adds.

The most impactful feedback has come not from customers, but from within. “As the team gets more comfortable with the Bundle Splitter system, we are getting a lot of great feedback from employees. They like the efficiencies they’ve gained along with not having to pull sheets by hand anymore,” states Cohen.

## RECRUITMENT TOOL

In a competitive labor market, Canrack offers equipment that requires less physical strength and minimal training. The splitter system streamlines the order filling process. Fewer cranes and side loaders are required, which helps reduce labor needs. Because the Bundle Splitter does all the lifting, the physical requirements of the operator are significantly reduced, too. “A service center can hire a temporary worker with very little industry experience. If the temp can count, they can fill sheet orders with our Bundle Splitter. This



### “IT’S AN ‘AHA’ MOMENT WHEN THE CUSTOMER SEES A DEMONSTRATION OR VIDEO OF THE BUNDLE SPLITTER SYSTEM.”

---

**JASON CLARK, CANRACK METAL CENTER SYSTEMS**

opens up a lot of hiring opportunities for the service center,” says Clark.

#### **DRAWING BOARD AND DEMO**

Planning for the new IMS facility began in earnest in 2020. Then IMS representatives attended a North American Steel Alliance (NASA) event and met up with Clark. Canrack is an operational supplier to NASA members, who are primarily service centers like IMS. “Through our affiliation with NASA, we were familiar with IMS. Their new Phoenix site was an opportunity to work together. We discussed the specific needs of the Phoenix location, showed them a video of the Bundle Splitter system and took them to a customer site for a demonstration of a similar

splitter,” reports Clark.

“The Canrack solution, for us, was very appealing. When we saw it in action, our expectations were confirmed,” notes Cohen. IMS motivations for the splitter system were focused on finding efficiencies “and making sure we had the right environment for our employees and the right cost structure for customers,” Cohen adds.

Seeing the Bundle Splitter in action helped make the purchase decision easier for IMS. “During the demonstration, the operators shared some best practices with us and gave us some insight on how to get the most out of the splitter system. That was very valuable,” recalls Cohen.

Clark agrees. “It’s an ‘aha’ moment when the customer sees a demonstration or video of the Bundle Splitter system. They say, ‘I didn’t even realize this equipment existed.’ Then they see one of our ads, or meet us at a conference, and become aware of the system and its many benefits,” explains Clark. And now that the Bundle Splitter system is up and running in Phoenix, “the machine is very easy to operate. It’s a good value, realizing our needs in three key areas. A manager of another IMS location was eyeing the system a few weeks ago. We are always thinking about our long-term plans and we hope Canrack will play a role in that,” compliments Cohen. ■

---

**Canrack Metal Center Systems Inc.,**  
Toronto, Canada, 1-905-564-6250,  
canrack.com

**Industrial Metal Supply Co.,**  
Phoenix, Arizona, 1-602-454-1500,  
industrialmetalsupply.com