Improving the Wire Harness Manufacturing Process

To reach increased production goals, Boeing has identified wire harness manufacturing as an area of opportunity to minimize cost, time, and error.

Background:
Each month, 52 Boeing 737 planes are manufactured. Each is made with over 150 miles of wires, a significant percentage of production complexity and time.

Motivation:
Human operators are well-suited to the delicacy of handling wires but introduce inaccuracy and inefficiency at key points. Re-thinking the process would help operators to work more productively so that Boeing can produce more planes at a lower cost.

The Reelette Strategy:
The new process uses reelettes, disc-shaped plastic containers for storing, identifying, and transporting wires. Boeing has developed an entirely new workflow for manufacturing wire harnesses centralized around reelettes.

Our Task:
Build a module that receives reelettes and reorders them into the proper sequence for assembly.

Our Solution:
The final design possesses each of the following capabilities which we integrated into a standalone, functional machine.

Evaluation:
Using simulation, analysis, and testing we characterized the effectiveness of our system. Based on our results, Boeing will move forward with fabricating our final design and work towards formally integrating it into the new wire harness workflow.

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