

PMT

Packaging Machinery Technology

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Flexibility

BY MARIA A. FERRANTE

On The LINE

Ever-evolving designs have forced packaging machinery to become more flexible.

Look for modular solutions. Packagers must now “pack on demand” which means shorer runs for individual SKUs. Some strategies that consumer packaged goods companies are employing are modular equipment that can roll-in/roll-our as needed, multiple permanently installed equipment, easily programmable intermachine transfer conveyors, flexible equipment, manual labor in-house or contract, according to Edward Goldman, senior vice president, Foster-Miller, Waltham, Mass., during a presentation at the Conference at PACK EXPO Las Vegas.

Packaging machines are taking cues from the processing end. George Gordon Associates (GGA) has introduced the AccuWrap wrapping system to meet their customer demands for flexibility in pizza wrapping.

“A wrapping machine for pizza needs to be able to run a sixteen inch crust, punch in a new recipe, change the forming box and the pitch of the conveyor without tools,” says Ron Downing, vice president marketing/sales, GGA based in Merrimack, N.H. “The electronics on the AccuWrap will even prompt the operator on the necessary steps to accommodate the new product like the right film to put on the machine with a lock out to keep the machine from running until the operator has con-



The modular construction of George Gordon and Associates Accu-wrap FG-2DDDW allows removal of all modules for expediant change-over and flexibility for future line changes.

firmed they have completed the items. “Entering a recipe automatically sets parameters such as the temperature and speed. Those items needing operator attention are posted on the touch screen. The whole process of change-

over takes no more than ten minutes.” Modular machines can allow you to adapt your line to different situations with ease. “Up time means more product shipped at no additional overhead cost. The flexibility and modular-

FLEXIBILITY ON THE LINE

TODAY'S LINES, TOMORROW'S FLEXIBILITY

ity of the AccuWrap helps the customer to gain a competitive advantage," Downing says. As needs change, modules can be added to the AccuWrap later for new configurations.

While the luxury of adding a newer, more flexible line is ideal; there are times when a company needs to look at adding flexibility to an existing line.

"Many times we do not always know what we own. We learn what is needed for the original installation and believe that is all the machines are able to do," says GGA's Downing. "Investigate the possible options of the machine you own, read the manual.

"Call the solution provider and ask if there are any upgrades that can add flexibility. Many machines like the AccuWrap are designed to accept upgrades and many manufacturers design upgrades for retrofit."

Conducting Dynamic Simulation analysis is one way of increasing flexibility on an existing line

"Such analysis is a very useful tool when working with complex operating scenarios and can help pinpoint where problems are by observing accumulation and buffering behavior; determining the optimal operator head count and related activities around a line and analyzing overall line performance to determine areas of improvement," says Oldacre.

In order to get the best results from the model, it is important to have access to "mean time between failures" (MTBF) and "mean time to repair" (MTTR) data as inputs

In addition, you must consider the expected human interactions as per the frequency of loading packaging materials and the human load and unload requirements. These two elements should be inputs to the model and will help to generate the most reliable and realistic results.

Whether you are retrofitting an existing line or have the luxury of designing an entirely new packaging line, there is a winning game plan for all situations. **PMT**

Maria A. Ferrante is editorial director of PMT magazine and has been writing about the packaging industry for over a decade.

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