

Seven tips to put more uptime in your downstream.

Here are seven things to consider when you're looking for ways to improve the uptime performance of your existing downstream packaging operations.

1 Have the right machine doing the right application.

- Is each step of your process automated to the right level for the expected line speeds and throughputs?
- Are your machines well-designed for the application and your plant environment?
- Are the interconnecting systems well-designed and -constructed for the right throughput demands and efficiencies?
- Are the individual machines and interconnecting conveyors designed to work effectively together?
- Are particular machine centers causing most of your downtime?

2 Design your products and your set of SKUs with automation in mind.

- Are products and packaging materials designed properly for the automation level?
- Is the number of SKUs being run optimized for expected output?

3 Remember the old adage: Garbage in, garbage out.

- Are your packaging material specs right for your product expectations and for proper flow in your machinery?
- Are your products conveyed to the packaging system without degradation and in the right throughputs for optimized operation?

4 Consider plant and production line flow.

- Do product and packaging materials come into the system right where they're needed?
- Are the connecting conveyor systems sized appropriately for the product and the line throughput expectations?
- Is ample accumulation provided at the appropriate spots of the packaging line to facilitate proper flow and uptime?
- Is there ample end-of-line pallet capacity to allow for expected accumulation based on pull-away forklift staffing or AGV capabilities?
- Have you considered potential future growth needs and line flexibility requirements?

5 Think about operator ease of use and maintenance ease of execution.

- Is there ample access to machines for regular operation and changeovers?
- Are changeover parts organized and easily accessible?
- Is access for clearing jams and loading packaging materials optimized?

6 Don't forget about training.

- Are your operators adequately trained?
 - ♦ Basic machine operation (Standard Operating Procedure) development and training
 - ♦ Troubleshooting training
 - ♦ Changeover training
 - ♦ Jam and fault clearing training
 - ♦ Cleaning and sanitation training
- Are your maintenance personnel adequately trained?
 - ♦ Basic maintenance skills training
 - ♦ Machine-specific training
 - ♦ Troubleshooting training
 - ♦ Preventive Maintenance development and training
- Do you have the right training resources available?
 - ♦ Up-to-date machine manuals and training guides
 - ♦ Qualified training personnel
 - ♦ Documented training assessments

7 Have the right line control and communication setup.

- Are HMIs appropriately positioned, with proper screen access for various levels of employees?
- Do the HMIs provide appropriate information to the operators—for example, specifying faults when they occur and visually indicating their locations in the machine, and letting them know when machines upstream or downstream are jammed or in need of materials?
- Is there ample data collection and analysis for what's happening on the line and what is operationally expected of the line?
- Do machines notify operators and other machines when a fault occurs or when they run out of product or packaging materials?
- Are all the machine centers in the line communicating to the central line control panel for maximum coordinated uptime?

About IPM

A perfect-fit is always smarter than a close-fit. A demanding packaging line solution in an uptime-critical process requires deep expertise.

IPM designs, engineers, specifies, procures, integrates, installs, starts-up and commissions comprehensive OEM-neutral, custom-automated end-of-line packaging systems for customers who own and operate highly regulated, high-value and high-volume food, beverage, pharmaceutical and life sciences processing plants.

IPM is a full-service integrator of new and renovated downstream packaging systems. To meet your business model objectives and future goals, IPM's OEM-neutral approach ensures the best combination of (1) machine center technology, (2) intra-machine conveyance, inspection and detection solutions and (3) systems-optimal controls architecture are successfully integrated. Premium brand owners and contract manufacturers depend on IPM's deep expertise to streamline and de-risk their high volume and often complex downstream packaging solutions.