

There's no crying over... incorrect batch codes?!

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How centralised production data management reduces the scope for human error

Here's a little trivia for you: Did you know that human error has been cited as a primary cause or contributing factor in disasters and accidents in industries as diverse as nuclear power aviation, space exploration and medicine? We have all been consoled at some point in our lives after having messed up good 'n proper with that ol' platitude: "We are only human - we all make mistakes." While there is no denying the truth of this, the fact of the matter is that sometimes these little mistakes have very big repercussions.

Despite all the automated machinery involved, the production line is not safe from error caused by human intervention either. For most manufacturers, important data has to be manually inserted at some point by an operator - and it is very often at this point where things go wrong.

This is where the advantages of centralised data management through integrated machinery networking are clear. Markem-Image, an international OEM that's range of coders is exclusively distributed by Pyrotec PackMark in South Africa, has developed a software system that has been specifically designed to reduce the capacity for human error - ultimately saving time and money down the (production) line. Brandon Pearce, GM of Pyrotec PackMark, explains the benefits of this software: "CoLOS software has been specifically designed for centralised data management, allowing customers to link, manage and operate all printers throughout the plant."

"It offers production planners real-time data on the production process, by linking the production plan to individual bagging machines; providing increased visibility of the productivity of each machine; providing more accurate scheduling; capturing downtime information so that operators can identify the causes of machine errors; providing accurate performance reporting, and - importantly - automating the coding information, thus avoiding the risk of operator error."

Traditionally, batch and code data is manually entered into this system. When the report is pulled by the production supervisor, if a code has been entered incorrectly the whole line grinds to a halt while the root of the problem is investigated and rectified. This causes massive delays on the production line and can lead to further complications, such as cross contamination. Centralised data management allows for the fast and accurate retrieval of production batch codes, as coding information is automated.

CoLOS also offers massive benefits in terms of reporting. Supervisors have access to the status of production at any time. "The system allows data to be extracted at any point, providing a live update of any glitches in the system immediately. For example, if a machine has gone down, the system will reflect this - meaning that it can either be repaired or switched. Normally, the production supervisors would only learn of this too late, thus leading to production downtime," explains Pearce.

"So while it can't guarantee safety from human error in every aspect of life, in terms of the production environment - centralised data management through CoLOS software can certainly assist in reducing the risk," smiles Pearce.

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