

Convenience at Your Fingertips

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A cake mix supplier has 12 hours to fill a 15,000-bag production order for a new customer. During the seventh hour, the filling machine shuts down with no warning. The machine operator attempts to troubleshoot and diagnose the problem but is unable to do so. After consulting with other employees and making a call to the equipment manufacturer's service team, the supplier still does not have an accurate diagnosis. The filling machine service team is four states away and an in-person service call is the only option. Losing a new customer, before the first order is complete, is now a distinct possibility.

Rewind to the same scenario, but the supplier now has a small tablet device that connects him to live help almost instantaneously. Production is delayed only minutes. The job is done and the new customer is happy. This result is made possible through the technological innovation of the mobile service device, which takes troubleshooting, monitoring and maintaining to new heights.

A few years ago it would have sounded like a scene from a science fiction movie. Today, it's becoming a best practice in the filling industry. New mobile technology allows the cake mix supplier to video conference with the equipment manufacturer while standing in front of the inoperable equipment. By using a small tablet device, equipped with a camera and linked directly to software in the filling machine, the plant operator can show the service team the exact problem while monitoring operational data. The technician can troubleshoot and then explain to the operator what needs to be done to get the machine back up and running. A process that went from a potential for days of downtime is transformed to minutes.

Mobile Monitoring

Equipment monitoring benefits managers by ensuring that production is running smoothly, but it also allows them to diagnose issues before they cause a major shutdown. Using mobile technology, bagging and filling system manufacturers have developed the capability to monitor a machine through a handheld tablet device. The device combines the monitoring capabilities of a machine's PLC and weighing controls with the ability to order parts and live video conference with service technicians. Best of all, it does this through a mobile service device that allows

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operators to access machines from anywhere within their plant. No longer does a manager or operator have to be standing next to the machine, or even in the same building, to ensure maximum production efficiency.

Problem Prevention

Mobile service devices allow for preventative maintenance in a few different ways: production analytics, scheduled maintenance and alerts.

With analytics in the palm of the hand, managers and operators can look through readouts and see how production is running from day to day or even within the hour. When a production team isn't maximizing its potential, an employee can dig further to diagnose the problem and make adjustments for more efficient filling.

Through the wireless connection, the mobile service device is linked to every component within the machine. The software knows exactly how each part should operate and when it isn't working properly.

Troubleshooting 101

Alerting an operator when trouble arises is the first step in catching a problem. The problem, however, isn't always something that the operator knows how to fix.

In the past, an operation would have to shut down to notify a service person from the equipment manufacturer. Once notified, the service technician would have to drive or fly to the cake mix supplier to take a look at the machine and diagnose the problem. With a mobile service device, this is no longer the case. In fact, with just the touch of a button, operators can video chat with a member of the filling system manufacturer's service team. Service team members can look at the part that isn't working properly through the video chat, or they can take over control of the device and look at the production analytics and 3D diagrams of the part that is malfunctioning.

Once they've diagnosed the problem directly through the mobile service device, the service team members can walk the operator through the steps to repair. It's a quick process that greatly reduces machine downtime.

Time Is Money

In addition to monitoring of the machine, routine maintenance checkups are also important for keeping equipment running at peak efficiency. Routine checkups include everything from testing each component to lubricating moving parts. Taking a look at machine components on a regular basis isn't just good for peace of mind during production runs, it's also a way to ensure that unexpected costly shutdowns don't cut into profits.

Seamless Product Sales

To further increase efficiency and cut out the frustrations of a middle-man, the new

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technology of the mobile service device simplifies part sales.

When it's time to replace a part of the filling machine or restock spare parts, the machine operator is able to pull up the specific parts within the mobile service device. The operator simply identifies which part is needed and places an electronic order directly through the device.

A New Generation

It wasn't long ago that the majority of machines were manually operated. They required multiple skilled hands to run and constant supervision. From there, bagging and filling equipment advanced to offer customers machines that were fully automated and operated through one control panel. This increased efficiency by connecting each component to the control panel and decreasing the number of operators from many to one.

Now, advancement to a mobile device is no longer a manufacturer's futuristic dream. Having a technician at your fingertips to help troubleshoot, diagnose and walk through maintenance issues is transforming the industry.

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