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### Winning Customer Satisfaction through Value-Added Enhancements

Today's competitive markets are forcing OEMs to rethink their product offerings. Customers are no longer satisfied with standard equipment— their needs and demands are changing.

More and more companies require machinery that is easy to use and maintain and that will help them reduce errors. OEMs that can offer value-added capabilities with their products will go a long way toward differentiating themselves in the marketplace and improving customer service.

For instance, OEMs and machine integrators can help customers improve overall quality control and accuracy by incorporating ink-jet marking into machine design. This concept is still relatively new to the industry. Only recently have manufacturers begun to integrate RFID readers, vision systems, and barcode scanners into their equipment in place of standalone identification systems. Printers are one of the last components left in the packaging line to be incorporated into the main system. As a result, machine builders that offer turnkey systems with marking integrated into the process are at a competitive advantage. Equipment with built-in ink-jet capability instantly enhances the customer's perception of the product's value.

#### Reducing Errors

Integrating ink-jet controllers into the machine provides the end user with a flexible means of performing quick changeovers. This value-added service is particularly important for high-speed equipment, such as form-fill-seal machinery. OEMs can tout the benefits of higher throughput rates and less downtime to customers. Integrated systems are also easier to operate. The user merely selects the product to be marked and the machine does the rest, labeling the product at every required stage.

For manufacturers that need to change codes frequently, the use of multiple printing devices increases the likelihood of introducing errors. For example, a pharmaceutical company must mark blister packs, the cartons containing the blister packs, and the cases that contain the cartons. This process presents three opportunities for someone to manually enter information that is already available through the production line's automated system. OEMs can enhance their services to customers by introducing integrated ink-jet controllers as a way to help them reduce the likelihood of errors.

#### Improved Communications

Another benefit of integrated ink-jet controllers is a reduction in the need for human intervention. This offers increased value to the customer because the data is sent directly from the production control system to the labels that will appear on the products and packaging. Production data is converted into identification data from a variety of sources, such as PLC feeds, conveyor control systems, or wide area networks between multiple sites. The machine interprets and outputs data and position information intelligently, regardless of the machine's protocol.

In addition to reducing errors, integrated ink-jet controllers offer valuable feedback, such as how many products have passed a particular stage of the packaging process and whether or not these products have been successfully marked. The increase in production data and the ability to analyze such data allows customers access to a more detailed report of the production process, giving them the opportunity to quickly and easily pinpoint any problems that might occur.

The integrated controller is also invisible to the customer. This is extremely important to manufacturers that want a single, human-machine interface panel to control every aspect of the machine. The user merely enters or changes identification information on the system's main touch screen, as opposed to entering it on a separate device or screen.

By integrating ink-jet marking into machine design and emphasizing the benefits that these systems afford, OEMs will be able to offer their customers value-added capabilities that set them apart from their competitors.