

How to Leverage Data Acquisition on Your Weigh Price Labeler

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Technological advances enable today's weigh price labeling machines to not only weigh, price, and label packages faster, easier, and more reliably, but also to collect and archive real time data on packaging line productivity and throughput. Packagers that leverage data acquisition capabilities to monitor production and make process improvements gain strategic advantages that are key to improving performance and profitability. The open architecture of weigh price labeling machines now available makes integration with upstream and downstream systems seamless, offering users the opportunity to further automate their packaging systems. Since collected data is archived, traceability information is available quickly and easily should a quality issue arise.

Monitoring production

Fresh foods such as meats and cheeses are weighed, priced, and labeled at the point of production rather than at the store. The weigh price labeler collects the actual weight, total price, sell-by date, and bar code information of every unit that is packaged.

Often the end customer specifies that packages weigh between a minimum and maximum amount or an exact amount. The weigh price labeler collects the actual weight and total price of each unit. By reviewing the collected data, the producer can determine if the overall quantity of the product being supplied exceeds what the end user is being charged for. For example, if the end user is specifying that each tray of boneless chicken contains two pounds and analysis of the collected data reveals that packages weighed two pounds and one ounce, then steps can be taken to either improve the accuracy of the equipment feeding the tray, such as slicers, or the producers can bill the customer at a higher rate so profits are not lost.

By analyzing the data acquired from individual production lines running the same product using identical equipment but achieving different levels of productivity, companies can look for causes for the variance. This may lead to uncovering issues such as insufficient operator training.

Process improvements

With the availability of archived real time data, producers can look for ways to make process changes to improve throughput and uptime. For example, a company might believe that changing the tray size would improve productivity. Since benchmark data exists, once a change has been made it can easily be determined if the change resulted in improvement and if so, how much.

Weigh price labelers can be configured to collect whatever information the producer wants. By analyzing the archived data, companies can investigate trends, make production comparisons, evaluate equipment and personnel efficiency, and easily identify areas where improvements can be made.

Since weigh price labelers provide real time information directly to supervisory computers, they eliminate the need for plant personnel to visit the plant floor to collect line-status information. In addition, plant managers can update label entry information from their desks, downloading it directly to the weigh price labeler.

Integration

After packages are weighed, priced, and labeled, they are packed in cases. Leading weigh price labelers feature an open architecture, network connectivity, and use a structured query language database. These machines can easily be integrated with case scales designed for improved data management and high speed. The scales weigh the case and apply a label and bar code that identifies the product in the case and its total weight. The weight on

the case is what the customer is billed for, while the consumer pays the price on the actual package.

The scales collect data about the case itself, how much it weighs empty and full, and the weight of the Styrofoam or other packaging materials used. An analysis of this information can determine if the producer's price is in line with the company's actual cost.

Integrating a case scale with a case packer and palletizer offers additional advantages. The case scale downloads the information to the case packer and the palletizer and also pulls information back from it. The palletizer can be told what palletizing pattern to use and builds records from the serial number picked and placed. The information becomes part of a pallet record. This results in a complete e-pedigree or product genealogy that enhances quality and supply chain management capabilities for producers.

Traceability

Technologically advanced weigh price labelers and case scales enhance product traceability. Since critical product information is captured, producers can access a database of production data, time, content, price, and weight information for every package and every case. Having the ability to trace products down to the individual package gives producers and retailers more control over production and distribution. Retailers have faster and more effective recall capabilities. With the heightened concerns about counterfeit products and food and product safety, fast, effective traceability is a strategic advantage.

Weigh price labeling machines have evolved from standalone equipment on a packaging line to an essential data gathering tool. With their ability to

capture and archive data and communicate with up and down stream systems, these machines provide producers with a wealth of information. Data acquisition enables producers to monitor production, optimize processes, expedite product traceability as well as streamline operations, and achieve improved productivity and profitability.

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