Software Step-in Solves Palletizing Dilema

Container Manufacturer

FOX IV Technologies, Inc.

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The ability for FOX IV's software experts to step in on a project lead to a satisfied customer with software that exceeded expectations.

Growth & Impact

Flexibility
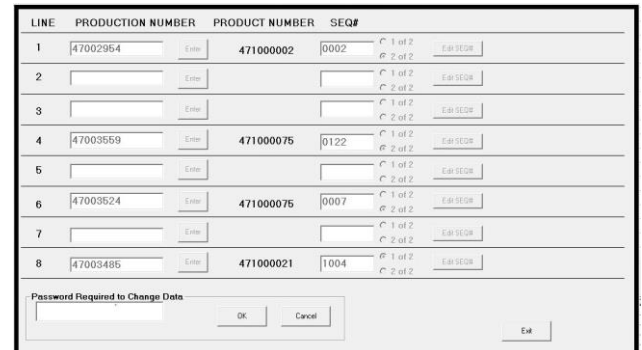to program for competitive units as well as own.

Middleware
compatibility.

Completion
of initial palletizing line within time frame

Software Step-in Solves Palletizing Drama

FOX IV's ability to program for competitive equipment and work with the customer's OPC Server lead to the completion of a project following unforeseen circumstances.

Background

A large container manufacturer contacted FOX IV regarding a palletizing project installation using existing non-FOX IV equipment. While the Zebra-based print and apply equipment had been installed, the software portion of the project could not be completed due to unforeseen circumstances. The manufacturer asked if FOX IV could step in to do the software to complete the project.

APPLICATION:

Multiple palletizing lines would be merged into one line where the pallets would be labeled on the front and side with 4" x 6" labels. A PLC would communicate with the labeling station PC identifying which line the pallet came from. The software would determine what was running on the line, merge the data from the customer's SQL database with the label format, and send labels to the print and apply unit. The customer was using Kepware as the OPC Server to communicate between their PLC and the labeling station PC.

ENVIRONMENT/SPECIAL CONDITIONS:

Temperature controlled factory environment. Zebra-based print and apply systems from a different manufacturer.

Solution

FOX IV provided a custom software solution to work with the Kepware OPC and existing equipment.

The software is hosted on a dedicated PC for the palletizing line. The software communicates through Kepware to pull the line information from the PLC. When that data is received, the program looks at the information entered for that line and searches the customer database to validate the data and retrieve the remainder of the label information. If information is invalid, a warning screen appears and labels are not printed until the operator corrects the information through a View/Edit process, which can be password protected.

As part of the software dashboard, information such as line, production number, product number, sequential number, and shift. It also displays the previous pallet information and status of each pallet. There is also a Test Print/Reprint option which is used to print and label without updating the sequential number. This would be used if a label was damaged and needed to be reprinted or if tests were being run on the line.

Following the first installation, the software was purchased and installed in two additional plant locations. Since that time, the customer has purchased FOX IV software for palletizing lines in 6 other plants. Software was modified per location requirements. Adjustments were made to accommodate more production lines, adding the Line and Production number, sequential numbering, or accommodating printing to a tabletop printer.

VIDEO LINK: https://youtu.be/3fg_oz1n9gs

"Our software experience enabled us to step-in to finish the installation and create a satisfied customer in the process."

Patty Remo, VP Technology, FOX IV Technologies, Inc.