



CAVENDISH

Are you wasting money on every “make ready”?

The chances are that the answer to this question is yes!

In this article I am referring mainly to offset newspaper and commercial presses (web and sheet fed), but in practise similar issues can occur with any printing press.

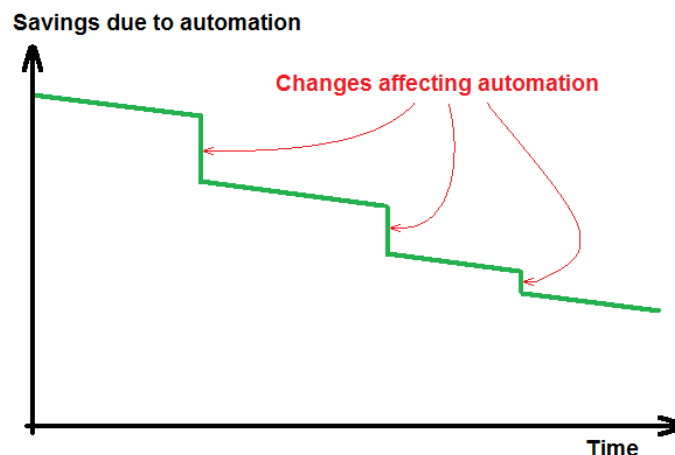
We all know how computers have revolutionised our industry in many ways over the last few decades. This has led to many savings (of cost, waste, time, etc.) now incorporated into modern presses and plants compared to the old manual ways of working. I call these “savings due to automation” and I know that how these work and perform is not at all well understood.

The systems available can be split into three classes. These have increasing costs/complexity, but the potential savings increase as well:

- Open loop – These rely totally on the printers to make adjustments. The only automation is centralisation of all controls on to a quality desk(s) rather than (as in the old days) when the printer had to walk around the press making adjustments.
- Self-learning (or expert) – Ink presetting, ink curves, damp curves, cut-off, etc. - These use a database to aid the printers by presetting adjustments based on previous press runs.
- Closed loop - Colour, registration, cut-off, damp solution composition, temperature, etc. - These measure and automatically make the adjustments required to keep optimal settings throughout a print run.

It is important to remember that self-learning and closed loop systems are not a panacea resulting in best possible performance once in place. The former are very dependent on how they are configured and the information “learnt” and so still need to be maintained and optimised. The later also need to be monitored to ensure that they are working as expected and required.

To illustrate, the diagram shows a simplified summary of what happens if no optimisation or maintenance is carried out. There is a slow decline over time of the savings due to subtle variations in the plant or other factors. But the situation is made much worse if any changes are made. Such changes could be anything from an alteration of consumables (or supplier) to a modification in workflow or even a change in the jobs/products being run in the plant.



This is not just theory! I have firsthand experience of the operation of many plants around the world. Typically the focus of everyone is, of necessity, on day to day production issues. The technology behind the scenes is often not well understood and is treated as a “black box”.

My original suggested answer to the title question may seem a bold and sweeping generalisation, but let me outline my reasoning.

Let's consider a "make ready", by which I mean all the workflows and automation involved in getting the press from initial start up to good copy running at optimal printing speed. Basically this is everything that contributes to start-up and running waste. Included in this are presetting, press speed related curves and printer adjustments as well as any open loop, self-learning and closed loop systems. Now there are 4 possibilities:

1) Unknown

Not aware of any issues or are not measuring performance. With the daily pressures it is all too easy to assume that all is working correctly or satisfactorily.

2) Known issues

Know of issues but do not know how to resolve or do not have the time or the in house expertise to analyse or to fix. Or perhaps various suppliers are all confusing the situation by not talking to each other at the right technical level. Proper integration is the key to maximising savings.

3) Work in progress

Understand what is contributing to waste and have plans and/or a project in place to ensure that everything will soon be working optimally and that performance will be monitored and measured.

4) All working optimally

Have everything in the process relating to "make ready" completely under close control. In which case, congratulations and I would like to share your best practice experiences with the wider community! – Please get in touch.

Obviously the goal is to get to and stay in category 4) – **But which matches your plant?**

Many plants are in categories 1) or 2)!

Even those in category 4) ("all working optimally"), that can answer "no" to my original question, need to monitor and evaluate the situation. Analysis of performance and changes to settings needs to be carried out regularly just like preventative maintenance procedures for the press hardware. As shown in the diagram, any changes made in the plant could have a large affect on this area of operation, let alone on any optimisation.

I am not saying that "make ready" waste can be completely eliminated, just that it is possible to avoid wasting money unnecessarily. In the current economic climate constant vigilance and application of best practice is particularly essential in order to maximise profits.

Henry Kafeman has worked on all aspects of newspaper and commercial printing press control systems during his career. This has included the complete life-cycle of software development, commissioning, support and troubleshooting. It has ranged from management information systems (MIS) through quality desks to the embedded controls at the heart of the presses. With his unique experience, analytical skills and engineering background he now runs a consultancy company working with printing plants.

Related topics to consider are resilience and disaster recovery and maximising your environmental (green) credentials, but these will have to wait for another edition.....

Henry Kafeman

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About the Author Colin Thompson

Colin is a former successful Managing Director of Transactional/Print Manufacturing Plants, Print Management/Workflow Solutions companies and other organisations, former Group Chairman of the Academy for Chief Executives and Non-Executive Director, helping companies raise their **bottom-line** and **increase cash flow**. Plus, helping individuals to be successful in business and life in general. Author of several publications, research reports, guides, business and educational models on CD-ROM/Software/PDF and over 400 articles published on business and educational subjects worldwide. Plus, International Speaker and Visiting University Professor.

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