

## **10 Tips to Buying a Cartoning Machine**

(or any packaging machine for that matter)

When purchasing a cartoner or any other machine – there are several important factors to consider. The following tips are based on several years of working together with customers as a Salesman, Engineer, and Project Manager. Most lessons were learned from positive experiences, while others were learned the hard way. The objective of these recommendations is to make the total process as trouble-free as possible for you, the customer.

### **1. Cartons**

Before committing to a production carton design, consult your packaging machine supplier. Often the machine supplier can catch errors or recommend changes that will improve the machineability of your cartons. These recommendations will help increase production efficiencies, quality, and the appearance of your packaged product. Do not be afraid to use your carton machine supplier as a resource.

### **2. Customer Specifications**

If you, the customer has a specification packet (outlining required components, procedures, service, etc.), do your best to get it to the machine suppliers as soon as you have identified them as a qualified source. It is likely that the machinery supplier will have concerns with some of your specifications – make sure you know where you can be flexible; it could save time and money.

### **3. Maintenance / Changeover**

How “easy” is the machine to maintain? If possible, look to visit an installation with a similar machine. Is the machine dedicated to a specific size or adjustable? What does the changeover entail? Do you really need a quick changeover feature? Are there change parts? (Note: Sometimes it is best to have a mix of change-out and adjustable parts – each has their place) Quick changeovers equal more uptime.

### **4. Versatility**

Can the machine run a broad range of carton sizes & styles without major changes? Most standard cartoning machines should be capable of being adjusted within a standard size range set by the supplier. This is important when considering the life of your cartoner – will it meet your future demands? However, keep in mind that some product/carton applications require special modifications that will limit the versatility of your cartoner.

### **5. Experience**

Does the machinery supplier have experience with applications identical or similar to yours? Trusted suppliers will have a video library of every machine that they have built. Ask to see these videos and/or to speak to other customers that have similar machines.

## **6. Customer Service**

Check references to see how well a potential supplier has responded when problems occur in the field. Every packaging machine will encounter a problem or two – especially during startup. Most problems are solved quickly, but if the problem persists, does the supplier have a reputation for working with customers until a solution is found or are they known to “cut & run.”

## **7. Scheduling**

Once you have selected a supplier, they are now your partner in this packaging project. If you have a critical installation or start date that must be met, tell your machine supplier up front so they can plan their schedule accordingly. Do not be afraid to ask for regular updates or photos showing the progress of your machine.

## **8. Upstream/Downstream Suppliers**

It is likely that you will be purchasing additional machinery upstream and downstream of your new cartoner. Typically, the machines in a packaging line must interface with each other through mechanical and/or electrical means. ADCO has been involved with many installations that have been successful because the customer allowed their suppliers to talk with each other before hand to see what each supplier required to ensure a well-integrated packaging line.

## **9. Factory Acceptance Test (Check Out)**

No matter what, send a knowledgeable employee to check-out the cartoner at the suppliers’ facility. This is the best time to make any final changes to the machinery. Additionally, it is your last chance to find any surprises before the machinery ships. Finally, this is a great time to meet and get to know the people who built and will stand behind your new cartoner.

## **10. Installation & Training**

Finally, do not forget to schedule installation support and training. Factory service technicians will ensure that your investment is properly setup and that your staff is trained to operate, adjust, and maintain the equipment. Proper training is the key to insure maximum production from your cartoner.

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