

Top 5 tips for improving your pack house productivity

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1 DESKILL THE MANUAL ASSEMBLY PROCESS

Provide a packing workstation interface that operators can use intuitively without having to make decisions based on target weight values in terms of grams or ounces. For regular sized fruits a visual target weight system based on removing or adding a specific number of fruits greatly increases line speeds.

2 ENSURE YOUR PACK HOUSE SYSTEM GROWS AS YOU GROW

Although the challenges facing packers have underlying common factors, experience shows that each pack house is different, with a separate set of requirements. The key to success is being able to provide a solution that can measure individual operator performances and then act on these metrics. Significant improvements in productivity can only be achieved if the current information from the pack house floor is continually used as the basis for ongoing improvements.

3 USE 'BEST PERFORMERS' TO TRAIN 'UNDER-PERFORMERS'

By measuring the performance of individual line operators, you can identify the best performers and use them to transfer their techniques to the under-performing operators through a structured training process.

4 MEASURE PACK HOUSE 'MASS BALANCE'

By measuring the weight of product entering the pack house in a given time and comparing it with the weight of finished packed product in the same period, levels of waste and overpack can be calculated together with the locations in the pack house. Ongoing improvements can then be made based on this information.

5 MEASURE THE PACK HOUSE DOWNTIME AND THE RELATED UPWH

An important parameter in measuring pack house productivity is the UPWH (Units Packed per Worker Hour). Empirical evidence shows that in most pack houses, at best, only 50 minutes in any hour are productive, with typical performance running around 45 minutes per hour. Productivity is dependent on a range of factors that can be divided between actual packing line efficiencies and operational 'downtime' issues, both of which reduce available packing time and the UPWH. Downtime is typically caused by a combination of factors which, individually, may seem insignificant. By having a system in place which logs collective downtime occurrences, improvements can be made.