



Application Note



Thermal Transfer Overprinting Considerations for TTO integration into your VFFS machines

The challenge

Integration of a coding solution into a vertical form fill seal (VFFS) line is something to be carefully considered. Integration challenges can be both physical, in terms of space and the need for mounting accessories, or software and communications-based. While the cost of a printer is a fraction of the investment in the overall packaging line, a misstep in selection of a coding solution can seriously degrade the performance of the much larger investment.

The Videojet advantage

Videojet Thermal Transfer Overprinter (TTO) products have been engineered by packaging industry experts to make printer installation and operation as simple as possible. As a pioneer in the industry with over 20 years of experience, we have the right accessories, we understand the nuances of integration, and we have a long history of working closely with all of the major VFFS manufacturers.

Videojet offers TTO printer and ribbon solutions that can help you keep pace with ever-increasing production volumes. And you can rest assured knowing that our solutions are backed by one of the largest field service networks in the industry.

The importance of expertise and partnership

Much goes into the selection and installation of a VFFS machine. While your VFFS equipment partner can walk you through the details of product specification, it is equally important that your coding supplier understands the engineering and architecture of your machine and how to best integrate your print solution into it. With over two decades of experience, Videojet understands this requirement and partners closely with the major VFFS manufacturers to help ensure machine compatibility and ease of printer integration. Moreover, we work in tandem with manufacturers to stay on top of trends and innovation to help ensure that we can meet the increasing demands of their equipment and your operation.

Accessories and features for physical integration

TTO printers are mounted directly into VFFS machines. The printer must have a small form factor to fit into the machine. Unique brackets are also required to mount the printer into the VFFS machine, as each model from each OEM is different. Videojet offers a wide range of brackets for different VFFS models to make the integration process as simple as possible. Videojet also offers additional accessories such as sealed rubber rollers and platens for different applications.

Success not only depends on having the right brackets and accessories, but also on the installation location. For example, the dancers on a VFFS machine smooth out the flow of the film. For optimal operation, the printer should be installed after the dancers where the film is stable to help ensure a high quality code.

Communications packages

Prior to advances in automation, printers did not communicate with the rest of the manufacturing line. Today, the norm is to integrate the printer user interface and control with the machine architecture and also the snack producer's Manufacturing Execution Systems (MES). Recognizing the different machine architecture and MES varieties, the Videojet DataFlex® line has a comprehensive communications package with many protocols supported as standard, including Serial, Ethernet and USB, providing our customers with multiple connectivity and interfacing options.

Replacing an old printer

Considerations must also be made when replacing an old printer with a new one. Aside from the time and labor needed to remove the old and install a new one, codes must also be altered and re-entered into a new format. Ideally, a new printer can use the existing brackets and code formats. This is true of Videojet's DataFlex printers that can frequently be retrofitted with brackets from other coding systems, often regardless of manufacturer. Similarly, existing code formats from non-Videojet software packages can typically be downloaded directly to the Videojet TTO without modification to the message file, helping to ease the transition and minimize concern regarding your code integrity.

Experienced support team for installation and beyond

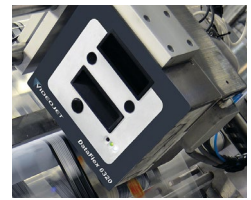
Understanding the little intricacies of integration can make a big difference to success. For instance, even in a continuous motion VFFS machine, the speed of the film is not constant. A small change in the speed of the film can affect print quality. Therefore, knowing the exact speed of the film is a critical input to optimize print quality at installation. Videojet is able to perform an encoder profile to understand the speed of the film down to the millisecond to help ensure the printer is set up for the best print quality.

With over 20 years of integration experience, Videojet's service and technical support team understands these intricacies and helps ensure that the installation is done right the first time. In addition, support is available throughout the lifetime of the printer with customizable service offerings.

A solution for the long term

The success of a coding solution extends far beyond integration. The solution must be reliable, cost-effective, easy-to-use and get the right code on the right product, time after time. Systems that offer fewer wear parts and lower maintenance, along with precise ribbon controls for optimal ribbon use, are ideal for snack producers. Easy-to-change ribbon cassettes and longer length ribbon rolls increase uptime and deliver more prints with fewer ribbon change outs.

Beyond reliability and cost-effectiveness, operation of the TTO should be simple. For example, in the Videojet DataFlex TTO solution, an intuitive touch screen interface and icon-based control deliver ease of use. In addition, a WYSIWYG image display helps improve visibility and reduce code content errors. Also, enhanced Videojet software provides Code Assurance by reducing operator interaction and minimizing potential for human error.



The Bottom Line

Whether purchasing a printer for a new VFFS line or an existing one, implementing high quality coding on your VFFS line requires thoughtful planning. Videojet is ready to help you think through the best solution for your production line. We have the right hardware, expertise and relationships with the major OEMs to help ensure your printers will integrate seamlessly into your packaging lines and that your coding process is perfectly suited to meet your business needs.

Ask your Videojet representative for more guidance, a production line audit or sample testing on your substrate.

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