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## PACESETTER 2.0

By adding various printing improvements and computer setup, Bennett Packaging of KC Inc., Lee's Summit, Mo., has turned its four-color Hooper printer slotter into a high graphics printer.

Emphasis on efficiency and just-in-time procurement are driving shorter and shorter run lengths. Runs currently average just over 1000 — down from more than 5000 in 1999. And as box makers strive to produce higher quality, dimensionally accurate, multicolor boxes on existing machines, longer setup times result — now pushing almost 50 minutes. Ignoring this problem guarantees lost profits.

Machinery suppliers advise buying a new fast setup machine. An alternative cost-effective solution is IMC's new Pacesetter 2.0, which offers the benefits of a computerized flexo press without the expense of a new machine. Compared to the cost of new equipment, the Pacesetter can be added for pennies on the dollar and provides these benefits:

- Cuts setup time dramatically
- Reduces scrap and achieves one box setup
- Gives consistent dimensional box accuracy (particularly important when automatic filling equipment is being used)

- Reduces dependence on operators and reduces need for training due to a new improved graphical user interface
- Allows short jobs to be run profitably
- Simplifies scheduling and allows easy interface to central scheduling systems due to built-in connectivity and new SQL database
- Allows IMC to download software updates and remotely diagnose and solve problems via new Internet connection
- Typically returns investment in less than five months (see [www.imcbox.com/acsroi.html](http://www.imcbox.com/acsroi.html))

Many older machines were originally delivered with computer setup controls that no longer function. The problem is that while machines last 30 years or more, controls can become obsolete in as little as seven. Aggravating this problem is a reduced level of technical support from suppliers as a result of consolidations and bankruptcies. Even as the level of technical expertise has eroded, spare parts and service prices have skyrocketed.

Converting machine control systems has been IMC's only business since 1988. The company claims to have replaced or retrofitted more setup controls to flexo folder-gluer and rotary diecutters than any other supplier. The Pacesetter system can be applied to any motorized flexo folder-gluer, printer slotter or rotary diecutter, including mechanical configurations as diverse as Langston style registers, S&S gang locking slotters or non-centerline machines, such as Emba.

To date, the Pacesetter has been installed on machines from 28 different manufacturers.

The Pacesetter can also be applied to older manual machines that were never equipped with computer setup. The recent retrofit done at Bennett Packaging is an example. The company's more than 40-year-old four-color Hooper printer slotter was rugged and well maintained. Bennett added reverse angle doctor blade flexo printing, lead edge feeder and IMC's Pacesetter.

While the fast computer setup was desirable, the principal advantage to Bennett was freeing its operators from the need to "zero" or close the machine "in time" and the automatic return to



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last register after printing plate cleaning stops. The result of these upgrades is that Bennett now has a productive machine capable of high graphic printing with many of the features of the latest equipment, but at significantly lower cost. Also due to its simple design, maintenance should be low.

IMC's new Pacesetter 2.0 software runs under the Linux operating system, which is a stable open source 32-bit license free Unix variant that supports full graphical user interface, large memory space, easy customization, maintainability and portability. It has all the advantages of Windows® without its inherent problems. Linux is crash resistant and doesn't require an uninterruptible power supply. No shutdown procedure is needed; power can simply be turned off.

Pacesetter 2.0 uses industrial PC based open architecture hardware making it highly resistant to obsolescence. "Open Architecture" simply means that specifications are public and therefore parts are available from multiple sources. With no dependence on specific vendors, users are protected against supply disruptions or high prices and will never be held hostage to an inflated cost replacement part.

Setup control should be a priority when making productivity improvement decisions. Other productivity enhancing equipment, such as pre-feeders, palletizers or lead edge feeders perform only when the machine is running. Fast setup makes the entire converting line more productive by greatly increasing available running time.

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