

**ORGANIZATION:**

Christian Book Distributors is the world's largest distributor of Christian bibles, books, videos, music and artwork, based in Peabody, MA.

**APPLICATION:**

Installed updated printer applicators that accommodate top down labeling. The solution allowed Christian Book Distributors to avoid having to rearrange over 100 of its factory scanners.

**ENVIRONMENT:**

Labels were not printing fast enough at Christian Book Distributors, causing boxes to pile up and bottlenecks to form on the conveyor line. And, when both the United Parcel Service and the United States Postal Service told Christian Book Distributors it needed to reposition the shipping labels on its boxes, the company knew it needed to make a change.

**KEY BENEFITS:**

- Increased speed by 15 to 20 percent
- Decreased downtime and loss of labor
- Increased volume on the production line
- Reduced costs

## PEAK Technologies Prints Its Label On Christian Book Distributors

### *Printer applicator solution keeps distribution line running smoothly*

**Thinking "Over" the Box**

For Christian Book Distributors (CBD), the world's largest distributor of Christian bibles, books, videos, music and artwork, speed and uptime are crucial to its distribution line. When both United Parcel Service and the United States Postal Service informed CBD it needed to reposition the shipping labels on its boxes, the company knew it needed to make a change.

In order for the company to receive a significant discount based on shipping volume, it had to switch its shipping labels from the box side to the box tops. More than 100 of the company's scanners would have to be rearranged, because they were not oriented to read labels placed on the top of the box. In addition, CBD needed a printer applicator that could print and apply shipping labels at a high speed. Boxes were piling up because the labels were not printing fast enough, resulting in bottlenecks on the conveyor line.

**Starting at the Top**

CBD needed an effective solution to its shipping-label problem. PEAK Technologies, a systems integrator focused on supply chain automation and inventory management solutions and services, had been a strategic partner to CBD's information technology (IT) department for more than 13 years. So, when it came time to find a provider for new printer applicators, PEAK offered its expertise in this area as well.

"We wanted to keep our solutions under one umbrella," said John Roden, distribution manager for CBD. "We chose PEAK because we have a lot of respect for them and we have a strong relationship. They also provide excellent service and support for stationary applications."

The chosen solution was the CTM 3600 printer applicator, which CBD had previously purchased from PEAK, as its main motion applicator. It currently has four CTM printer applicators running on two-and-a-half miles of conveyor and has recently added two more printer applicators, which will be used as a subsystem and located on another floor of the factory.



"Because of the top-down labeling requirement, we were able to meet the post office requirements while increasing efficiency," said Roden. "With our previous solution, the labels weren't being applied in a timely fashion, placing more demand on us, which in turn, placed heavy demand on the printer to run faster."

**Increased Uptime Also Applies**

The CTM printer applicator also solved an unexpected problem with CBD's existing print engines. Because the print engines were based on older technology, they didn't have the ability to print "bulls-eye (2D)" barcodes. PEAK introduced updated Zebra/CTM technology which allowed CBD to avoid rearranging the 100-plus factory scanners.

"In general, label applicators are complicated pieces of equipment. They need air, electricity, ink, paper and glue-all in one small spot-while functioning to apply labels," explained Roden. "But, the unit is one of the most stable applicators. It runs smoothly and efficiently."

The new applicators answered CBD's call for a faster solution, increasing speed by 15 to 20 percent while reducing downtime and loss of labor. "Rather than modifying what we had, we chose to invest in new applicators," said Roden. "Because of the amount of downtime we were experiencing using competitors' equipment, we saw a tremendous improvement in uptime alone with the new solution-PEAK's solution was more reliable."

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### Maintenance By the Book

PEAK's CTM applicators are designed for easy operation and simple maintenance. Before installation, a site survey was required to determine factors such as conveyor speed and the orientation of the boxes to the applicator. In addition, training was offered during the installation process to ensure employees knew how to integrate and operate the system. A specialized PEAK technician came in and set up the printer applicators and trained the staff on how to set parameters for delay and dwell time, adjust air pressure, clean print heads and troubleshoot potential problems. Maintenance employees were taught how to fine-tune the equipment.

"PEAK has helped the technical expertise of our maintenance staff improve so much that we can do more of our own maintenance," Roden said. "PEAK offers life cycle support for every unit as well, so we know we can always count on them for any issues that may arise."

### No Time for Downtime

While CBD's service engineers in production rarely have a need to call in a technician, the IT department has taken advantage of that benefit. "Our IT department occasionally calls in PEAK technicians, because they use 30 to 40 printers in that department," said Roden. "Our major problem is time—it's critical to production. If something is down, we're losing money. PEAK is excellent at service calls. They could be at our facility within minutes."

CBD's busiest time of year is during the holiday season, from November through Christmas. This past year was busier than normal for the company and all four applicators ran at top speed and volume for eight hours a day, without any significant downtime. "Even during slower times we run our machines full out. Because of the new applicators, our employees are freed up to do other jobs. They also proactively replenish catalogs and boxes on the lines. It helps on the operations end," said Roden.

### More Applicator Applications

Because of the success of the solution, construction is underway at the facility to implement a new process in the conveyor system that requires two more applicators to apply shipping labels. Basically, it's an additional shipping subsystem. It will allow CBD to increase throughput by 20 percent through the conveyor, while increasing volume on the production line through a picking system.

"There is a real cost savings with the system because there are no extended hours or second shift operations," said Roden. "We're running the machines we have now, and when the two additional applicators are installed, we'll be adding an extra 20 percent onto production."

To learn more about PEAK Technologies, visit: [www.peaktech.com](http://www.peaktech.com).

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**John Roden, Distribution Manager,  
Christian Book Distributors**



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