
Expressing the Mail

Frank Yen, Canada Post

What would you do if you could not rely on your postal carrier to deliver your important letters? What if you didn't know—one day to the next—whether your mail would go to you or get mixed up and go to someone else? Proper mail delivery is a modern-day phenomenon that most people take for granted. However, it takes a great deal of organization, effort, and expertise to keep the mail system running smoothly.

Canada Post is the firm upon which Canadians rely to handle their mail safely, quickly and securely. Canada Post must grapple with the logistics of servicing thirty million people, as well as 900,000 businesses and public institutions, and interfacing with 170 postal administrations around the world to keep this vital supply

chain operating. Canada Post handles ten billion pieces of mail annually and employs 62,000 employees. It also maintains 25 major mail processing plants, 24,000 postal outlets and shops, and a fleet of 5,300 vehicles.

Problem

Canada Post wanted to improve the operation of its Mail Preparation work cell at the Hamilton Mail Process Plant.

Solution

Canada Post set a goal of analyzing the level of staffing appropriated at the work cell and designing a way to make the flow of mail more efficient. Because of its excellent reputation and successful use in other areas of Canada Post, they selected ProcessModel simulation modeling. Data regarding counter service were input into the simulation model to assess

At a Glance

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Results

As a result of using ProcessModel simulation nationwide in 20 plants, Canada Post discovered they could better organize staffing and scheduling. This was demonstrated when they were able to efficiently process the same amount of mail, while reducing work cells by 50 percent. This led to a savings of \$2 million per year. Canada Post also utilized the existing mail processing equipment more effectively, and increased the mail flow (throughput). This resulted in further reductions—both in work and overhead costs.



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manpower needs and to evaluate operational processes and equipment utilization. After relevant data was obtained, the benefits of simulation were explained to management personnel, who saw the potential and gave the “okay” to proceed.

Results

Each stage of mail processing operation was simulated and reports were generated for later evaluation. Some of the steps included collecting mail from the dock, opening the bags, sorting out the non-machineable letters, and separating all mail, according to its end destination. Management was impressed that the entire flow of mail—from beginning to end—could be visualized on a simulation model.



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Future Application

The project was so successful that management is already drawing up plans to use ProcessModel for future test simulations. They feel it will increasingly ensure a steady,

streamlined mail operation and maximum utilization of mail processing machinery. Other areas targeted for analysis include: reduction in space requirements,

decreased complete cycle time for processing the mail, and improved facility design (including assessing the efficiency and productivity of the plant, as well as its ability to meet modern mail demands). They also look forward to testing their system under a variety of other scenarios, as opportunities and conditions arise.

FIND OUT MORE

About the Author: Frank Yen has been employed with Canada Post Corporation since 1988. He has 25 years of experience in manufacturing industry, primarily in the disciplines of industrial engineering and project engineering. He earned a B. Eng. in Industrial Engineering from the Technical University of Nova Scotia and a Master of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Manitoba, Canada. Currently, he heads a team to redesign and build a “Model Registration work cell” and apply lean concepts, ultimately developing a simulation model to demonstrate the result.

Contact: If you have any questions about ProcessModel, please contact the ProcessModel team at (801) 356-7165, or e-mail info@processmodel.com.

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