

Packing in All the Right Ingredients at

As an Australian, family owned and operated business, St. George Foodservice pride themselves on being one of Sydney's leading Foodservice Distributors, who have been offering the best possible products and services for over 35 years.



In the last few decades, new products have been regularly introduced and added into their product catalogue to meet consumer demand for new tastes. The business volume has almost doubled in size, while the way of packing remains very much unchanged.

What is the best way to pack?

In order to further release the potential of the process, an improvement team as seen in Figure 1 below, was formed with a mandate to improve the efficiency of picking, packing and loading, with assistance from CTPM CI Specialists.

Figure 1: Afternoon Shift Improvement Team



L to R: Peter – Warehouse Manager, George – Afternoon Shift Leading Hand, Eddie – Afternoon Shift Leading Hand, Matthew – Operations Supervisor, and Emmanuel – Operations Manager

To gain more of an understanding of the current situation, observations were undertaken and feedback was collected from all of the Afternoon Shift Crew. The team mapped out all the steps and

activities during the picking, packing and loading etc, with the initial key improvement opportunities / issues identified below:

1. **Labour Waste** – Employees take 2-4 hours to pre-make cartons, then stack up and move them to three packing tables every day before packing starts, refer to Figure 2.
2. **Space Waste** – Pre-made boxes, trolleys and pallets waiting to be packed for each customer's order over crowd the Packing Area and rack aisles.
3. **People Frustrations** – Employees are unhappy due to hot working conditions on the third packing table during summer, ability to access the pick faces when aisles are crowded, and difficulty to reach and lift heavy items located at the back of trolleys.

Figure 2: Pre-making cartons



Where should we start to effectively address these issues to remove the frustrations of employees and increase the efficiency of packing?

The team first started with the one issue which could be embraced by everyone on Afternoon Shift, relocating the third packing table. This quick win not only kept the packers away from hot working conditions but also shortened the travel distance between the packing table and truck loading. This change was highly appreciated by the team, and with the help from Day Shift was introduced immediately.

Then, the team decided to focus on solving a key problem that would greatly impact the overall performance of the packing process. The concept of using an automatic box sealing machine was

discussed during team meetings, with the main purpose being to establish a packing line flow and eliminate the need of pre-making boxes to save the labour as well as space.

Figure 3: Automatic Box Sealing Machine



The introduction of an automatic box sealing machine would see expected benefits such as:

- Save 3- 4 labour hours every day to make and stack up the boxes;
- Eliminate the time and effort of moving the pre-made boxes to each packing table;
- Eliminate the space taken up by the pre-made boxes;
- Save the labour motion to seal the top and bottom of each box; and
- Increase the packing flow to create “pull” in the whole process.

At first, this suggestion was not greatly supported by the team and would need further development of the idea before acceptance.

To build the team’s confidence in the proposed new equipment, a trial was set up by the machine supplier for the team on site. The trial went ahead but due to a couple of issues and limitations, the maximum value of the automatic box sealing machine was not demonstrated during the trial period.

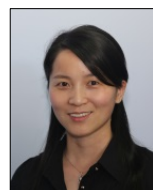
After 2 weeks, a site visit was organised to another site using the proposed machinery and layout in their packing process.

During the site visit, the delegation team from St. George Foodservice not only had a direct view of how to best utilise the equipment and facilities to improve the productivity and safety in a limited space, but also had the opportunity to learn from the site’s experiences of introducing this equipment to their employees, who resisted the change in the beginning.

The site visit further enhanced the confidence of introducing the machine to the current packing process. In the next improvement cycle, a New Area Management Team will be formed to focus on how to best configure the sealing machine, conveyors and other support facilities together at the site to maximise the benefits for all activities and employees in this area. The team will use CTPM’s **New Area Management – Design & Install** team member manual to guide them through their improvement activities.

We at CTPM congratulate the team on their commitment and engagement throughout the cycle and look forward to seeing the great success of the new packing line during Cycle 2. A special thanks to the Day Shift for the great help of relocating the racks to create more space.

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