



# Unwrapping Automation Excellence

## HMI's make packagers more flexible.

Like many markets, the packaging industry relies on the optimal performance of its machines to not only satisfy customer demands, but to meet or even surpass budgetary requirements. That means innovation is key. So when it came time to rethink how they were doing business, Illinois-based [Crest Foods](#) asked their local automation distributor, [RSA, Inc.](#), to help them upgrade a horizontal packager. Crest—a packager of dry ingredients in the food industry—was already familiar with a human-machine interface system from Parker Hannifin called Interact Xpress, so they were eager to see if and how it would improve the machine.

“We liked Xpress’s Ethernet connectivity to many devices, both via drivers and using the Web-publishing features,” says Rick Rice, Crest Foods application engineer. “And it’s easy to connect to legacy platforms via serial communications. Also, we needed the flexibility to revise and reuse applications.” Because Interact Xpress is a distributed-HMI solution, it supports multiple browser-based client stations at any given time, allowing multi-station and even remote support. “It’s an ideal choice for users who want remote access to their HMI’s or who want to edit their applications remotely,” says Mario Mitchell of Parker.

[Interact Xpress](#) can be installed on any Windows 2000 or XP machine and comes pre-installed on Parker’s XPR2 PowerStations, which is what Crest Foods uses on two types of machines: vertical cartoners and horizontal packagers. “Anything from soup to cookie mix to seasoning pouches to instant potatoes are packaged on the horizontal packager, while cake mix, desserts and skillet dinners are packaged on the horizontal cartoners,” explains Rice.



Here, the Crest horizontal packager wraps food according to commands programmed by the HMI. Displayed on the HMI is Interact Xpress software, which lets Crest revise and reuse applications.



“RSA has been a pleasure to work with,” he says. “Bill Johnson, vice president, is our RSA sales representative, and I meet with him monthly to discuss products and applications. It was Bill

who brought Dan Cohen, Parker's regional sales manager, into our facility to help us maximize the tools available on the XPR2 units."

Because of the system's ease of programming, adds Rice, his team can add diagnostic messages when needed, and it has a subsystem for diagnosing servo issues. "It's able to lead operators through setups by making context sensitive, giving more information to operators and maintenance people."

The result, says Rice, has been that machines with Xpress have increased productivity by an estimated 10 percent. They now plan to roll out 50 machines equipped with Interact Xpress over the next few years as they cycle through scheduled rebuilds.

"Xpress has been a great addition to the Crest Foods operations," says Rice. "We have a great deal of legacy PLCs here, and the quick connection with the SLCs, CompactLogix, and ControlLogix platforms has allowed us to upgrade the older systems to look and function like the newer ones. The technology in the control panel has become transparent to the user because we are able to provide operator stations with the same screens and terminology as the newer packaging equipment."

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