

Stop! Don't Walk Away from a Running Press

If you've been following my articles, you know we've been talking about the key issues that lead to downtime, waste, overtime, low morale, and ultimately, lost profits. All of these can stall growth — or worse, put a company out of business. If you haven't been following along, visit ctflexo.com and click on "Articles."

Now — let's talk about one of the simplest, most preventable sources of waste I see far too often: **press operators walking away from a running press.**

The Press Operator's Primary Job: Run the Press

There is no valid reason an operator should walk away from a running press. Yet, it happens — regularly. Why? In many cases, it comes down to poor policies, lack of support personnel, inadequate training, or, occasionally, a lack of accountability. And when an operator consistently shows they don't care, it's time to either correct that behavior or make a change. That's where solid leadership is critical.

Common Excuses – and Why They Don't Hold Up

"I needed boxes, cores, ink..."

All of that should be ready at the press before the job begins.

"Bathroom break..."

Breaks should be planned between rolls — or, on continuous-run jobs with a butt splicer and turret/sheeter, there should always be a designated "second" on the press. This doesn't need to be another operator — just someone who knows what to look out for and how to stop the press if needed.

Why It Matters

When a press is running, **anything can happen** — web breaks, matrix issues, ink problems, plate bounce, bad material, factory splices, or even a plate coming off (yes, I've seen that happen... twice). Most of these problems can be caught early *if* the operator is present and paying attention.

But if no one is there?

- Waste skyrockets.
- Downtime increases.
- Expensive damage can occur — to nip rolls, anilox rolls, or worse.

Sales is the Backbone. Production is the Spinal Cord.

You can have the strongest sales team in the world, but if production breaks down, the whole company stalls. **No movement. No growth.**

That's why it is absolutely critical for operators to **stay at the press** when it's running. The only walking they should be doing is walking the press — watching, listening, and staying alert for anything that could go wrong.

Take a Hard Look at Your Floor

I encourage you to take a close look at what is happening on your production floor. If you have cameras, use them. If not, observe unannounced—while remaining out of sight—to get an accurate picture of what really happens when you are not present.

You might be surprised at how a few changes — like simply keeping operators at their press — can dramatically cut waste and boost profit.

This is one of many issues, but it's one you can take control of today. If you'd like to talk through your current setup and identify ways to improve, I'm always open to a conversation. Let's work together to get your plant running at its best.

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