Converting & Flexible Packaging

Industry Application

Overview

The converting industry is defined by "High-Mix, Low-Volume" production. Converters constantly switch between materials—clear poly films one hour, opaque paper the next, and reflective foils after that. Roll-2-Roll Technologies delivers **One Sensor for Any Material**—a sensing solution that eliminates the need for sensor recalibration during changeovers. **No programming is needed**, and the "Plug-and-Play" orientation makes it easy for any operator to run, significantly lowering the **total cost of ownership**.

The Engineering Challenge

Frequent job changes and diverse materials create bottlenecks for traditional sensor technologies.

- **The "Clear Film" Challenge:** As packaging moves toward "no-label look" transparent films, traditional optical sensors fail because the beam passes through. Ultrasonic sensors work but are sensitive to air turbulence and temperature fluctuations.
- **Setup Time Fatigue:** Operators must manually recalibrate sensors (gain, contrast) for each new material. This takes time and introduces human error.
- **Splice Failure:** Detecting splices (especially clear-on-clear) is critical to protect downstream quality, but notoriously difficult for standard photo-eyes.

The Roll-2-Roll Technical Advantage

Our patented fiber-optic technology offers the capabilities of a **Vision System in a Sensor Package** without the complexity.

- **Material-Independent Physics:** We rely on light scattering, not blocking. Every material—clear, opaque, or reflective—scatters light. The sensor detects this signature automatically without calibration.
- **Linear Optical Technology:** Our fiber-optic array provides 1:1 image magnification without distortion, ensuring the same edge detection resolution regardless of web position.
- **Zero Recalibration:** Switch from opaque foil to clear film without touching the sensor. It works instantly, significantly reducing changeover downtime.
- **Environmental Robustness:** Unlike ultrasonic sensors, our fiber-optic solution is immune to the acoustic noise, air turbulence, and vacuum environments found in high-speed converting.

- **Operational Simplicity:** Simple "teach" functions and an intuitive interface mean no "expert" is required for setup.

Key Applications

1. Splice, Defect, and Flag Detection

The sensor possesses **spatial awareness** to detect various types of splices (including difficult-to-see transparent and butt splices), tears, and holes at high speeds (up to 1,000 ft/min). It can also detect flags used to mark defects on a web, triggering downstream equipment to reject that section automatically.

2. Universal Web Guiding for High-Mix Runs

For converters running various material widths, the wide sensor eliminates the need to mechanically reposition sensors during job changeovers. Guide clear film, opaque paper, and reflective foil without parameter changes using "Plug-and-Play" capability.

3. Automated Blade Positioning Verification

In slitting lines, the sensor verifies that the blades are set correctly by measuring the slit widths in real-time. This eliminates operator error associated with manual tape measurements and ensures strict tolerance adherence.

4. High-Speed Slitting

In slitting rewinding, web width often varies slightly. Roll-2-Roll's **Wide Viewing Area** ensures the sensor never loses the edge, even if the web oscillates or width changes during the run, preventing machine stops. A single sensor can even track multiple slit webs simultaneously.

Supported Web Guiding Solutions

From the unwind to the rewind, Roll-2-Roll provides comprehensive control for the converting process.

- **Unwind & Rewind Guiding:** Controls the lateral position of the unwind or rewind stand to ensure the web enters the process aligned and winds up with a straight edge. Essential for preventing telescoping rolls.
- **Edge Guiding:** The standard for most converting applications. Keeps the web aligned to a fixed point for printing, coating, or laminating.
- **Center Guiding:** Automatically calculates the web's center using two sensors. Perfect for converting runs where material width varies (e.g., different job sizes) to keep the web centered in the machine.
- **Web Oscillation:** Deliberately oscillates the web or winder to distribute gauge bands (thickness variations) evenly across the roll, preventing star patterns and hard spots.

Technical Comparison

The "Scanner vs. Laser Pointer" Analogy: Comparing an Roll-2-Roll Sensor to a standard photo-eye is like comparing a flatbed scanner to a laser pointer. A standard sensor only knows if the beam is blocked. An Roll-2-Roll sensor (scanner) sees the entire "picture" of the web edge. This allows it to distinguish between a real edge and a transparent film layer, ensuring reliable guiding where simple photo-eyes fail.

- **Material Handling:** Competitors require selecting Infrared vs. Ultrasonic sensors. Roll-2-Roll is **Material-Independent** (one sensor for all).
- **Calibration:** Traditional systems require "Teach Mode" for every job. Roll-2-Roll requires **No Calibration**.
- **Cost Effectiveness:** Eliminates the need for separate vision systems or multiple sensor types.
- **Ease of Use:** No complex menus or "Catalog Labyrinth." Just simple, reliable sensing.