

## **Counting on electronic counters** **when mechanical ones tick their last**

Electronic controls are becoming easier and cheaper to use.

Here's a recent example: I needed to find a simple counter to replace an old, obsolete mechanical counter. The price of the mechanical counter – if I could find one – would be between \$600 and \$700.

Instead, I plunked down less than \$100 for an LCD counter and spent another \$15 for a simple contact switch. Now I have a multifaceted device, capable of playing a number of roles. And because the electronic device can accommodate a variety of voltage sources, generally from 5 volts to 240 volts, it can be used with already-available signals without having to add a contact or sensor.

There are a variety of counters available. Among them:

- Single-counter devices, such as components used to count product coming off the press conveyor.
- Multifunction devices, such as counters armed with a relay output that can be used to sound an alarm with a relay output that can be used to sound an alarm or stop the operation of press or inserters after a predetermined number is reached.
- Specialty counters, used to calculate time versus a shaft count, thus enabling users to track the speed of various machines.

Counters can be deployed almost anywhere, and can be used to determine number of copies, copies per hour, press or press surface speed. They can also be used to keep track of events such as web breaks, folder jams or any other recurring even you may want to monitor.

It's up to you and your imagination to figure out how counters will benefit your project.

Have fun and make it count. – *NT*