



# **NEED A LABELING SYSTEM TODAY?**

## **5 STRATEGIES TO SLASH LEAD TIMES**

## Introduction:

It's ironic — wonderful and yet somehow simultaneously frustrating. Success can sometimes be painful — *and actually become its own problem.*

Once the ball really starts to roll, maintaining momentum — and most importantly propelling gravitational acceleration — *can mean all the difference between success and failure.* Everything is on the line.

**So when you need a labeler to keep up with the sudden deluge of manufacturing orders that come in, you can't wait until tomorrow — you need it yesterday.** Otherwise who can possibly satisfy so many new quota orders fast enough?

*You can practically feel the money slip through your fingers.* Standing still isn't an option. Nor is failure — essentially one and the same in today's "need-it-now" culture of demand.

**But what if you could slash the lead time of a labeling system in half?** Suppose you could onboard that critical labeler you need in 2 to 3 weeks — rather than the standard 4 to 6 (or more)?

**Suppose by the weekend after next, your manufacturing process streamed effortlessly** — label after label accurately positioned on your product, one after another, hundreds every minute. Accelerated and streamlined, your production line meets every quota order on time — as precise as highway mile markers fading into the horizon — *like a Ford F-150 set on cruise control.*

**That's not blind optimism — it's actually achievable logistics through an enlightened approach. All it takes is strategic planning and an educated selection of your labeler manufacturing partner.** Here are 5 ways to slash lead time and onboard your labeling system in half the time of what's standard in the industry.

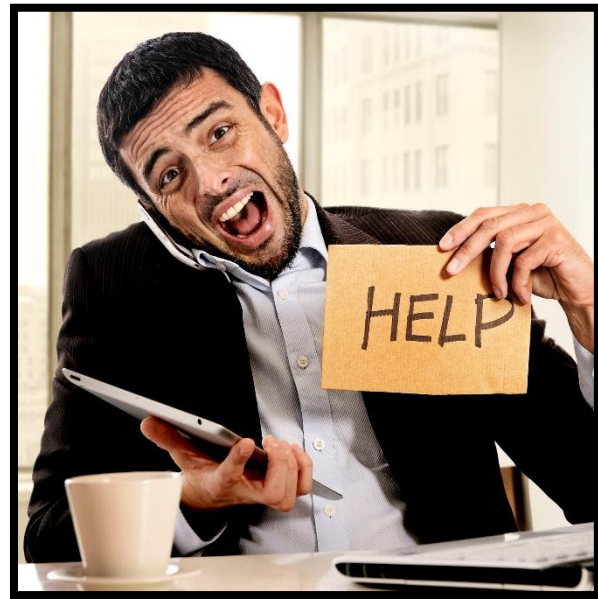
## The Challenge:

How soon can it be ready? That's the million-dollar question you'll probably ask your labeling system supplier. Because time isn't just money — it's the lifeblood of a business. *That's why you swear in traffic, why hair-loss cures are a multibillion-dollar industry.*

"This industry has become fast food," said Ed Schneider, Director of Sales & Marketing for CTM Labeling Systems. "People want it yesterday. A lot of times it's not just who has the better mouse trap — but how fast can I get the mouse trap? Time is priority number one — only secondary will the customer consider other choices and opportunities."

Yet the bitter reality is your labeling system can't possibly be done soon enough — *even if you had it last week, you'd still be playing catch up.* You've got orders you struggle to satisfy today because you're so backed up. And that's potential money down the drain — never to be seen again.

"Normally, automation is driven by the market — as demand increases, the pressure points for automation increase," added Brian Chivers, Assistant Director of Sales & Marketing for CTM Labeling Systems. "But nowadays, manufacturers are in such a jam to get these orders out the door — they need this stuff now."



But what if you could onboard a labeler in half the time most labeling manufacturers say it will take to pull off?

**The first thing to understand is who you ask — the labeling systems manufacturer you choose — can have the single most significant impact on the lead time of your machine.**

And the second most momentous variable in any lead time equation? That's all you — how you order, plan, and facilitate the installation of your labeling system.

# How to Onboard a Labeler in the Timespan of a 2-Week Vacation

Here are 5 strategies you can implement to optimize the onboarding process in 2 to 3 weeks. Narrow your lead time; successfully actualize a labeling system in half the time most suppliers claim it can be done.

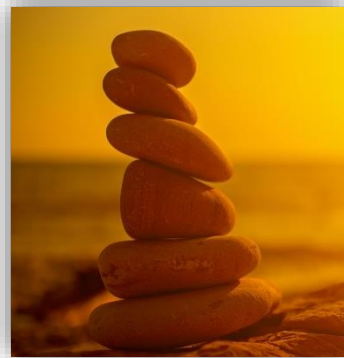
## 1. Partner with a Tier One labeler manufacturer that can move mountains.

**Clearly, the most formidable step you can take to speed up the delivery of your labeling system is to first work with a Tier 1 manufacturer.** They have the momentum to move substantial orders — and leverage greater sway with suppliers.

Because a sizable producer moves larger volumes of inventory, they wield a bigger stick and are given primary consideration when it comes to material requests. Their needs — and yours — are at the top of the suppliers' to-do list. You're higher up on the supply chain; *your needs get fed first in line at the Easter buffet.*

**“We sit on an inventory that is unlike any other from the start to finish,”** said Dennis Kotowski, Senior Tech Coordinator at CTM Labeling Systems. “If we get an order for 10 units that happen to use stainless steel, we can turn those around very quickly since we have the materials on hand. Because we carry considerable leverage, we can count on our suppliers to provide the materials we need when we need them.”

A sizable labeling equipment manufacturer can also preorder materials and supplies because they know they will soon be filling an order and loading it on a truck. *Since their loading dock is essentially a revolving door, they can plan — and work — ahead of the stream.* And that brings us to our next point.



## 2. Choose a labeling equipment supplier that has core units in stock — stacked to the ceiling.

Starting to build a labeling system from scratch is like using flint and steel to light a bonfire. It can be done — eventually. **But if you instead construct a system from an established core unit, the work is already halfway accomplished before the phone even rings!** Now the logs are soaked in lighter fluid; *toss a match and watch the flames dance.*

But many manufacturers don't even begin to build your labeling system until you call in an order. They start out cold — *which can mean a month or more of languished time.*

A strategically optimized labeling equipment provider will instead work from established core units — labeling systems that have already been built right up to the point of tweaked customization specific to the needs of the end customer.

“We prefer to build to a certain point in the manufacturing process and store the core unit in our vertical storage,” said Jerry Wade, Midwest Regional Sales Manager for CTM Labeling Systems. “In fact, we just recently added capacity to store several hundred core units in our Salem facility. That way we're more than halfway done before we even get an order.”

The same holds true for spare parts. When a replacement is needed, a company that plans ahead with core components is more likely to already have that piece in stock. Most often, the replacement can be packaged and shipped the next day — *like ordering socks off Amazon Prime.*

“That saves substantial time — rather than waiting for a purchase order before even beginning to build, or reaching out to component manufacturers and stitching the labeler together like an assembly house,” Schneider added. **“It's accelerated production — and that can be highly critical to your manufacturing line.”**

3. Don't hold back — clearly communicate any needs & preferences with your distributor like an open book.

**Proactive communication can be essential to agile labeler manufacturing.** When you and your distributor are on the same page — right down to the granular detail — the building of your system efficiently streamlines. *And that's when things really start to flow.*

Clear and pointed communication identifies key nuts and bolts in the construction process. Specification requirements are determined, guesswork is avoided — the tedious back and forth Q & A is eliminated from the strategizing process. This leads to a more direct and efficient production of the system — which can save weeks of change order delays.

“If you nail down the specification requirements in the beginning, you've already circumvented a great deal of the work,” Chivers said. “The right questions are asked upfront; all information is shared — nothing is withheld.”

The critical dynamics of a labeling system are in the fine details. It all goes back to the Labeling Machine Site Survey — the detailed questionnaire you fill out for your distributor that clearly states needs, site requirements, and other specifications. **Accurately outlining all the specifics right from the drawing board will propel the acceleration of your project.**

“That way, once we’ve cut metal there’s no turning back,” Kotowski said. “The right supplies and equipment have been sourced; engineering configurations are established. All the details are proactively streamlined — front and center. *Your labeler is already that much closer to coming home — right out of the gate.*”



#### 4. Partner with a labeling equipment provider whose engineering & manufacturing processes are organized down to the decimal point.

Agile manufacturing often comes down to *how well your supplier’s desk — and shop floor — are organized and put together*, how efficient their manufacturing capacity is down to the finest detail.

- How strategized and planned is the labeling equipment manufacturer in their execution process?
- How experienced are they — not only in building standardized systems but specifically engineered custom requests?
- Do they do their own engineering and machining in-house?
- Are they building a system from the ground up — or merely piecing spare parts together from a variety of labeling components?

“Because we have our own engineering capabilities and can do all our own machining, we can respond very quickly to any need or challenge,” Wade said. “It allows us to control our own destiny — and swiftly deliver for our customers.”

The legacy of your manufacturer can be vital. Experience is critical to the machine manufacturing process — **knowing what questions to ask, clearly understanding how to solve the challenges that inevitably happen along the way.** A provider who understands all of this can efficiently optimize the timing and execution of your labeling machine.

Ask your labeling equipment provider:

- How long have they been producing labeling systems?
- What sizes of systems do they build, and do they have experience with solutions similar to yours?
- Do they have on-site engineering teams to design & customize your system?
- What are their machining capabilities?
- What do they offer in a spare parts kit for critically needed components?
- Do they ask for a Label Machine Site Survey and how specific does it get?

## 5. Prepare the labeling site like your first baby's homecoming.

Preparing for the arrival of your labeling machine can be a lot like planning a nursery before a baby's born. There's a lot of groundwork and fine details to configure to ensure a smooth homecoming. **The installation site needs prepared in detail — clean, organized, and ready to plug in.**

- Do you have electricity, compressed air, temperature and climate controls in place?
- Is there ample space for the labeler to operate safely and efficiently?

"If the customer has everything established when it's time to connect the system, there's less time wasted going back and forth," Schneider said. "That's the critical step they can prepare for to circumvent delays with optimal efficiency."

Again, these are details that should be proactively answered in the site survey. Before your new system comes home, consult with your distributor about any installation and setup needs. This will help ensure a seamless onboarding of the system so that it is up and running with minimal hassle — *a plug and play approach.*



## Here & Now: The Beautiful Result of Narrowed Lead Times

The success of this process is quantifiable and obvious. **By effectively implementing these 5 strategies, you should be able to cut the lead time of your labeling system in half.**

The typical 4 to 6 weeks estimated for standardized label systems becomes 2 to 3. As for custom engineered systems — though lead times can vary depending on the tweaks and specializations involved, *the math remains consistent — on average 50% less time to onboard.*

**And what does that mean to your manufacturing? Practically the world on a platter with a side of bacon, a glass of orange juice — especially if you're struggling to keep pace with demand.**

“Automation is absolutely driven by the market,” Wade said. “When companies scramble to get product out the door, their manufacturing is hamstrung. The processes in place don’t allow them to meet purchase orders. That’s when automation becomes vital and critically time sensitive.”

Clearly, it’s today’s robust economy and job market that drives automation requests. Increased demand only makes agile lead times that much more critical.



“The number one question we hear every day from a new order request, ‘How fast can I get this thing because I’m losing money?’” Schneider said. “Whenever the phone rings, time is the first concern on a new customer’s mind.”

With the right strategy, sooner rather than later is not only possible — it’s probable. By optimizing these 5 steps, the manufacturing of your labeling system can literally double in acceleration.

**Imagine this scenario:** Your family loads suitcases into an SUV; you call your distributor. *By the time you return from vacation, your labeler is an actualized reality* — streamlining your manufacturing process like a dream come true.

But it is no dream — only the week after next. **And just like that, those hard to reach quotas become achievable.** You’re happy — *and your boss is happy because the customers are too.*

Good luck!

## What to Do Next:

Get your distributor on the phone. It’s time to have a frank and honest conversation — *drill into all those messy details.*

Tell them what’s on your mind — why onboarding your labeler is so time sensitive, what it means for your manufacturing and taking advantage of the opportunity of success.

Ask them about label systems manufacturers they work with. There are numerous options on the market these days — and the quality, expertise, and efficiency standards span the drawing board.

- Ask them about details and specifics — who do they like?
- What companies do they feel are truly up to the job and why?
- Which manufacturers can successfully streamline time-sensitive projects?

Next, tour that manufacturer’s facility — in person with your own two feet and eyes wide open. Grill their engineering team, ask about manufacturing processes, *walk the floors of their plant to see where the sausage is made.*

- How robust is their manufacturing?
- Do they make everything in-house?
- Do they have core units already in standby?
- Is there a machine center on site?

Once you've selected a manufacturer, fill out the Labeling Machine Site Survey in detail. Don't hold back. Clearly communicate your needs and aspirations to your distributor and manufacturer.

Prepare your site. Make sure you have any necessary compressed air and electricity established. Perhaps ask your distributor to visit the installation site to ensure all critical pieces are properly in place.

It's understandable if you feel a little anxious with the process — *there's so much on the line it practically pulses like an EKG*. **Nevertheless, proceed with detailed patience — take time to get it right.** The smooth onboarding of your labeling system depends on it. Remember — *every penny of planning can save a fortune in lead time.*

Relax. You've got this — peace of mind is right around the next bend.



## Perfect Timing — What CTM Labeling Systems Can Do for You

A legacy manufacturer since 1991, CTM Labeling Systems is one of the largest manufacturers of printer applicators in the industry — hands down.

Inventory is an ever-flowing stream — when it comes to material supplies but also in terms of completed labelers shipped out for installation. **Build it, ship it, move onto the next — that's a day in the life of CTM.**

“Over the course of our 28-year history, we’ve managed to partner with solid suppliers,” said Ed Schneider, Director of Sales & Marketing for CTM Labeling Systems. “Those relationships have proved mutually beneficial — for our suppliers, ourselves, but most importantly our customers. This keeps things fluid and simple — whenever we need something, we always have the materials to get it done.”

With our core units, we’ve mastered the art of the prebuild. At our Salem facility, hundreds of prebuilt label applicators are stacked floor to ceiling — a warehouse of possibility that just awaits a finishing touch. **Even before your order is placed, it's already halfway done. Life is short enough — why wait?**

Located in the Heart of the Steel Belt

**The beauty of Salem is we're in the heart of the steel belt** — perfectly positioned with a material supply universe at our fingertips. Cleveland, Youngstown, and Pittsburgh are within easy highway reach — *right where we need them.*

“What’s great about Salem is we can get materials pretty quickly,” said Dennis Kotowski, Senior Tech Coordinator at CTM Labeling Systems. “We cut and machine our own aluminum; we live and breathe steel. **Because of the sheer volumes of our orders, the mills turn on a dime — they give us anything we ask.**”

It’s our supplier’s level of trust — as well as the sheer robustness of our production — that we give back to our customers. It’s a mutually beneficial relationship. *Our success is yours — and we can move pretty darn fast.*

Everything we make is produced right here in the USA at our Salem facility. We’re not an assembly house. We build everything from the ground up — engineered, machined, and tested in-house. *It’s a sight to see and we do it all day long.*

## Just Ask — We’ve Already Begun

We don’t sit on our hands. **Even before you call, your labeler’s already halfway done. All we need to do is pull it off the racks and tweak it to your exact specifications.**

It’s just how we like to do business. We’re patient enough to get it right — but we hate to wait. Tell us you need it now — and we’re on it in no time. **We’ll finish your labeler before those other guys are barely breaking ground.** That’s how we roll — *barreling down the highway with the windows down.*

