

CAREERS IN CORRUGATED: PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

Executive summary:

The production staff at any corrugated box plant has a wide range of duties and responsibilities. Within the typical box plant, positions are available for die makers and die cutter operators, flexo press operators, ink attendants, and finishing functions. Some plants will include corrugator functions as well, providing even more opportunities. “Corrugators” are machines that manufacture corrugated board to be made into boxes or displays, or sold to other plants for this purpose. “Converting” refers to the manufacturing or converting of corrugated board into boxes.

Here are many of the job titles that fall into the production category:

Corrugator job titles:

- Clamp truck operator/ starch mixer
- Corrugator operator/ supervisor
- Stacker operator
- Double-backer operator
- Slitter/ scorer operator
- Stacker

Converting job titles:

- Baler operator
- Converting supervisor
- Curtain coater operator
- Cutting die mounter
- Flat bed platen die cutter operator
- Flexo press operator
- Ink kitchen operator/ attendant
- Litho label laminator attendant
- Press supervisor
- Printing plate room attendant
- Rotary die cutter operator

Finishing job titles:

- Finishing supervisor
- Flexo folder-gluer operator
- Semi-automatic taper/ gluer/ stitcher operator

“There are so many creative people out there submitting things to us...the challenging part is trying to figure out how to be supportive and make it look the way the designer intended it to.”

Brian Wecht, Prepress Team Leader, Modesto, CA box plant

Production personnel skill sets:

Specific skills will be required for each production position, but these general skill sets will be required in any production-related position.

- Common sense: ability to follow instructions
- Language skills: ability to read and understand manuals, instructions, safety rules
- Math skills: ability to apply basic calculations; general high school-level math
- Basic computer competence
- Ability to understand and comply with company safety and quality standards
- Ability to meet physical requirements; jobs often require bending, stretching; lifting items that may reach 100 pounds

“The corrugated business is getting high tech now...in our company, everything is going computer, touch screens; it’s going high tech.”

Thomas Morris, Prepress Supervisor, Batavia, IL box plant

Production personnel education/ experience:

- High school diploma or the equivalent

Preferred candidates have:

- Prior work experience in a corrugated manufacturing plant
- Equipment operating experience

Skills needed for advancement include:

- Proven ability on equipment
- Understanding of job requirements – especially quality and safety-related issues
- Dependability, job performance
- Ability to work effectively under pressure

“...it’s a lot of fun...once you learn how to troubleshoot, you can walk back to the machine when [problems] happen again and, boom, you’ve got it and it’s really fun, ’cause it’s like ‘Yeah, I got it!’”

Eric Melchiors, Press Operator, Oshkosh, WI box plant