

Virtual checkout puts customer trust to the test

PCMC proves a pandemic is no match for meeting a customer commitment

Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, PCMC had to find a way to conduct a factory acceptance test (FAT) with participants in three countries located on two continents. The scenario involved PCMC associates in **Wisconsin**, an LSX industrial logsaw manufactured in **Italy** and a large tissue producer in **Canada**. With tight travel restrictions in place, none of the participants could gather for an in-person FAT or even leave their remote offices.



*"When it became clear the in-person FAT process was not an option due to COVID-19, I expected the customer to ask PCMC to ship the machine and complete the performance criteria in the field," says **Paul Havey**, PCMC Sales Engineer. "Understandably, customers want to see, touch and*

verify first-hand the mechanical and electrical integrity of a machine."

With the project on a tight deadline and the customer facing increased product demand, PCMC's Accelerate team offered another option. Team members suggested **Accelerate Live**, the company's remote video assistance technology that utilizes cell phones, tablets and mobile apps, which wouldn't require anyone involved to travel a single mile.

"It is kind of extraordinary for how we do business," says Havey. "Prior to COVID-19 there would have been, in my opinion, zero percent chance that a customer would bypass a traditional FAT, and instead, get on a video chat for a couple of hours and ultimately accept the machine."

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Making a virtual FAT a realistic option actually began months prior. It started with having honest conversations and building trust between PCMC and the customer.



*"Communication was key in this situation," says **Gabe Hernandez**, PCMC Project Manager. "There were things along the way that put the customer's trust in PCMC to the test. Instead of sugar coating issues, PCMC was upfront about any challenges or misses from our*

end. Because the trust existed, we felt comfortable proposing a virtual FAT to the customer."

Accelerate Live also had to be put to the test. During the days prior to the FAT, PCMC associates tested hardware, software and Wi-Fi connections in different locations. They also conducted demonstrations and practice runs with the customer.

An in-person FAT typically lasts multiple days. But given the increased demand facing the tissue industry because of COVID-19, and recognizing the importance of time, PCMC and the customer agreed to schedule the virtual FAT for just 90 minutes. To maximize the extremely condensed time, PCMC partnered with the customer to create a step-by-step plan to stay focused on what the customer expected to see.

"On this specific machine the two most important tests were cut rate and cut quality," says Hernandez. "PCMC was able to very clearly demonstrate both criteria. The best measure of success is the customer accepted the machine without any hesitation."

With the first virtual FAT complete, PCMC continues work to duplicate the success with future machines. *"I put myself in the customer's place and ask, 'what would I need to see to feel good about accepting a machine virtually?'"* says Hernandez. *"I think answering that question will be unique for every customer and every machine. However, PCMC and this particular customer proved the tools and infrastructure are in place to complete a virtual FAT successfully."*

"I think customers will be open-minded about this kind of checkout in the future," says Havey. "The virtual experience cannot replicate all aspects of an in-person FAT, but in the right scenarios it can save everyone time and money while expediting the shipment of equipment."

