

THE 10 MOST COMMON MISTAKES MADE WHEN PURCHASING AUTOMATION EQUIPMENT



Automation.com has identified the 10 most common mistakes made when purchasing automation equipment. The list was compiled by individuals with extensive experience in both buying and selling machinery. The mistakes include:

1. No equipment specification – the failure to define your company’s expectations. These may include:
 - a. Performance expectations (cycle time, yield, machine up-time, etc.)
 - b. Preferred hardware (PLC, valves, robots, etc.)
 - c. Design requirements (guarding, wiring requirements, in-plant obstacles, floor space constraints, etc.)
 - d. Product information (prints, current process information or other critical aspects of the end product)
 - e. Acceptance criteria (what your expectations are before you’ll take delivery of the equipment)
2. Failure to visit the prospective automation house(s) before the quoting process begins – A visit to a prospective supplier early in the process will help ensure you are dealing with viable solutions from capable partners.
3. Incorrectly estimating the cost of an automation project – Get one or more quotes from potential automation suppliers *before* presenting a proposed project to your company’s management. Careful planning will save you money later.
4. Not enough technical capability in-house to support the machine – Getting up and running quickly will help you recoup the cost of your investment faster. Also be sure to consider the cost of keeping a piece of unfamiliar technology running on a day-to-day basis.
5. Failure to involve production people in the process – Factory personnel are a great source for creative ideas. Involve them early on to get their “buy-in.” Remember: your workers have the ability to make new equipment look good or bad.
6. Poor communication with the automation vendor – Even after a detailed equipment specification is submitted, it is important to communicate frequently with the vendor. Use all available technology – including Web meetings, 3D solid modeling, videoconferencing, etc. – to review your automation equipment as it is being designed and built.
7. Accepting automation equipment before it is ready – Re-engineering and troubleshooting after equipment installation are among the biggest sources of cost overruns. Do not allow the vendor to ship your equipment before it is ready.
8. Failure to supply the vendor with up-to-date drawings and parts within specification – Even the best automation houses may fail to detect non-conformance from the prints to the parts until it is too late, making rework inevitable.
9. Failure to design for automation – Some products are not intended to be assembled automatically from start to finish. Perhaps a semi-automatic or even manual solution would be more feasible.
10. Using the wrong technology for your application – Be sure to consider long-term strategy. Ask the following questions: Is there an “off-the-shelf” solution that meets your needs? Should you employ flexible or hard automation? Is the proposed solution lean-approved?

Keep this document handy and refer to it often until your automation project is complete. Doing so may mean the difference between failure and success.

Source: Automation.com