



Technical Article

## Feeding Systems and the Process

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Henry Ford's success with the auto assembly line indelibly imprinted on the minds of other forward-looking engineers and captains of industry the logic of having the worker stay put while the product moves. Today, in most continuous processing systems, whether in the chemical, plastics, food or any other applied area, product flows not from worker to worker, but from machine to machine each possessing a specialized processing function just as the auto worker still has his own specialized skill and purpose.

It may be a shaky analogy to think of Ford's conception of the assembly line as an early example of a continuous processing system, but stretching the similarities does serve to underscore the system-intensive nature of processing product continuously. In reversing conventional thought, Ford effectively demonstrated the potential for more widespread application of the principles of continuous production that had been, until that time, limited to the most basic industries.

In the early years of this century, though, there were a few hitches that would slow the realization of that potential: a lack of systems methodology, and a lack of the technology required to convert method, once devised, into machinery. But, in the 74 years since the first mass produced Model T rolled off the production line, systems knowledge has grown and matured, and technology has successfully translated raw concept into reliable control throughout the developed world.