

## MOST COMMON THERMAL PRINTER FAULTS AND HOW TO RESOLVE THEM!



Thermal Printers like the XXTREME/64 are a popular choice for businesses who want to create high quality, durable print copy on their pouches, lidstocks, cards, cartons or sleeves while saving valuable time and money. Used for multiple functions, Thermal Printers are a cost effective, capable and efficient asset to many companies. Yet, faults or damage to your Printer will cause you to lose valuable production time. To keep your production up and running we've created this Guide to the most common Thermal Printer faults and how you can resolve them.

### **What are the most common Printer faults?**

Simply explained, thermal printers use heat to melt the wax, wax/resin or resin-based ink onto paper labels or other substrates including tyvek lidstocks, pouches, cards and cartons.

Unlike conventional printers, Thermal Printers don't use printing plates. This gives Thermal Printers more flexibility, a quick turnaround, less product waste and more print media choices at a lower cost.

For creating long-lasting, high quality copy, Thermal Printing technology is a great choice. It is cleaner, crisper and opaquer than any Ink Jet Printer. But...if your print quality is degrading or you are printing incomplete copy your Printer could be experiencing a common Printer fault.

The five most common Thermal Printer faults are:

#### **1. A Build-Up of Dirt -**

Thermal Printheads can generate and attract a lot of dirt, dust and other contaminants. Without regular cleaning and maintenance the dirt can clog your Printhead causing it to wear out sooner. This Printer fault is most obvious when incomplete, missing or white lines are visible in your copy.

#### **Solution...**

To fix this fault you need to regularly clean your Thermal Printhead. A good rule of thumb to follow is that whenever you change a roll of Thermal Ribbon or two at the most you should also clean your Printhead. Use approved Printhead Cleaners supplied by the Printer manufacturer. Make sure that the Printer is powered OFF before doing any Printhead cleaning. NEVER use Solvents, Petrochemicals, Water Based Cleaners or other specialty liquids or cleaning cloths on a Printhead. Make sure that the Printhead is entirely dry before turning on the Printer.

#### **2. Using the Wrong Ribbon Chemistry -**

If your copy is printing at a low-quality then you could be using the wrong type of Thermal Ribbon for your respective product. When it comes to Ribbons and product there is no "one size fits all" combination. For each product type you need to consider what type of ribbon you require. Using low quality ribbons or material stock can also cause a build-up of dirt on your Printhead.

#### **Solution...**

It's important to always get the right materials for the job. If you're unsure of what Ribbon chemistry you should be using then do not hesitate to get in contact with a Dalemarm's Sales Engineer or Technician who should be able to advise you on the best

Ribbon for your respective printing job. We specialize in providing the correct Thermal Ribbon for the application be it a paper or plastic label, tyvek, poly, mylar, matte or varnished chipboard, foil, poly, etc. Dalemark will always try to evaluate all of the customer's products and offer one Ribbon chemistry that works for all of their products though sometimes it may not be possible.

### **3. Incorrect Heat Settings -**

If the heat settings on your printer are set too high, they could cause the image to smudge and be printed very blurred. If the heat settings are too low, the opposite will happen, and you will have a faded image. Having the correct heat settings will make sure that your copy is printed correctly and minimize potential barcode (1D or 2D) scanning and reading issues.

**Solution...**

If you are unsure of what heat setting you should be using for your Printer then do not hesitate to get in touch Dalemark and we will try to point you in the right direction ensuring that your products are constantly printed to the highest possible standards.

### **4. A Creased Ribbon -**

If your image has diagonal streaks through it your Printer could have a creased ribbon. Creased ribbons are caused by uneven spacing pressure from the Printhead, inconsistent Printhead pressure, incorrect Ribbon loading or excessive or slack Ribbon tensioning.

**Solution...**

To solve this problem the Ribbon should be removed and re-installed. Verify Printhead pressure is even and that there is no slack in the Ribbon tension but not an excessive amount of tension to cause Ribbon breakage. Contact our technical department if you require guidance on this.

### **5. A Worn Printhead -**

Printheads don't last forever. Worn Printheads can cause many issues including thin burn lines from the top to the bottom of the label, incomplete printing and a decrease in print quality or opacity.

**Solution...**

To fix this problem shut down the Printer. Remove and replace the Printhead as per Manual instructions. Make sure that you use the Manufacturer's recommended Printhead, or you will most likely cause some very expensive machine damage.

### **Conclusion.**

To ensure smooth production and minimize downtime an SOP for your Printer should be established to provide for timely Printhead and Printer cleaning as well as Printhead replacement procedures to prevent Printer damages and future costly repairs.