

PRINT

PROFESSIONAL

Tomorrow is NOW

By Elise Hacking

May 01, 2007

RFID continues to wow industry professionals with its seemingly endless capabilities. As a result, more companies are incorporating this technology into their business practices. In fact, a study conducted by IDTechEx revealed that as of 2007, 3.752 billion RFID tags have been sold over the last 60 years. Furthermore, sales jumped an astonishing 8 percent—from 19 percent to 27 percent—between 2005 and 2006.

While RFID technology is not something companies can find success in overnight, Mark Davenport, president of Nashville, Tennessee-based Mid South Graphics, noted end-users can find positive results by investing a little patience and creativity in their business model. “Most of the customers that we deal with on a daily basis have taken RFID beyond the slap-and-ship scenario, which [has] show[n] them positive results in reduc[ing] out-of-stock products, increas[ing] top-line revenues and tim[ing] inventory control on incoming and outgoing shipments,” he said.

David Grove, technical sales for Schober USA, Cincinnati, agreed with Davenport. “RFID is limited only to one’s imagination,” he commented. “In the past, it has been seen as an aid to inventory tracking, but I believe it will find a bright future in providing security for both products and people.”

To prove how broad the imagination can be, *BFL&S* decided to find out the latest and most creative techniques being carried out in this ever-growing market sector.

- Since 2004, implantable RFID chips have served as an alternative to VIP membership cards for a Barcelona nightclub. Individuals opting to rid their pockets of plastic can undergo a minor medical procedure where VeriChip—an RFID chip approximately the size of a grain of rice—is injected under their skin in the upper left arm. Manufactured by Applied Digital Solutions, Delray Beach, Fla., the RFID chip can be detected through a handheld device. Therefore, when RFID-implanted VIP members order drinks, the beverages are immediately added to their bill with a quick scan of the arm.

(From The Guardian)

- Last April, AXCESS International’s ActiveTag RFID technology for tracking vehicles

and personnel was implemented around the port of the Cricket World Cup final games. By using RFID, security was alerted when an individual had entered a secure area of the port, versus a prohibited area of the port, should action need to be promptly taken.

(From RFID Journal)

- The Australia Defense deployed RFID-tagged shipments of military supplies to the Middle East for the first time in April 2007. Mountain View, California-based Savi Technology provided real-time tracking devices for shipping containers, which allows the military to track shipments throughout its worldwide supply chain. The tags can be read by the 2,500 RFID In-Transit Visibility networks servicing defense forces in 50 countries.

(From Savi Technology)

- Located in the United Kingdom, Birmingham Heartlands Hospital is issuing RFID-enabled wristbands to surgical patients upon admittance to the hospital. To verify patient identity, the wristband stores personal information including the patient's ID number, name, date of birth and gender.

(From RFID Journal)

- In March 2007, VeriSign, Dayton, Ohio, along with Alien Technology, Morgan Hills, Calif., was awarded a pilot program with the U.S. Air Force Surgeon General. The companies will use passive RFID technology to streamline an Air Force medical facility's inventory and supply chain. Alien Technology cited an INPUT report which named the Department of Defense as the biggest contractor of RFID-enabled products and services, with a projected 2011 budget of \$215 million.

(From Alien Technology)

- Under the direction of engineering professor Jung-Chih Chiao, Hung Cao, a research assistant at the University of Texas at Arlington's Department of Electrical Engineering, devised an active 900 MHz and 433 MHz RFID tag and sensors that can be attached to cribs in an attempt to monitor and reduce the frequency of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). The system alerts parents when infants are not experiencing the proper carbon dioxide level.

(From RFID Journal)

- A Cincinnati-based company specializing in video surveillance, monitoring and video storage for government and business decided to implant RFID microchips under its employees' skin as a security enhancement. For example, to gain access to the company's data center, employees must raise their forearm up to a reader that determines if entry is permissible.

(From www.spychips.com)

- In an attempt to combat the growing problem of drug counterfeiting, Pfizer will launch its first electronic pedigree later this year. As a result, RFID-tagged bottles of Viagra will be tracked as they leave the company's headquarters until they are successfully delivered to distributors and wholesalers.

(From RFID Journal)

- Hitachi Ltd., Tokyo, presented its new Air Location Tracking II device in October 2006, which is capable of tracking the activity of people entering and leaving buildings. The active, WiFi RFID device can obtain position information about people inside in order to better facilitate emergency rescues.

(From Japan's Corporate News Network)

- One thousand CD and DVD rental kiosks found in retail locations have been installed with RFID technology to improve the tracking of customer rentals with more accuracy than bar codes. Touch Automation, Milwaukee, developed encoded tags that are affixed to the top of rental discs, to be read by the kiosk before customers receive their rentals. The RFID-enabled discs are then read again when customers return them to the kiosks.

(From RFID Journal)

- In May 2007, CVRD Inco Ltd., Ontario, Canada, contracted the Saratoga, California-based Ekahau to supply the RFID device Ekahau RTLS (Real Time Location System) for mining vehicles. The Ekahau RTLS offers real-time tracking utilizing standard, pre-existing WiFi networks, and can offer location within three feet of a corresponding tag. The president and CEO of Ekahau noted the products added advantage in finding trapped or lost miners in emergency situations, as well.

(From Ekahau)

- Employees and contractors of the federal government will carry RFID-enabled identification cards supplied by Gemalto, headquartered in Amsterdam, which also supplies 30 percent of the world's electronic passports.

(From RFID Journal)

It is impossible to avoid kinks when handling any type of new technology. Nevertheless, manufacturers anticipate additional promising results and applications for RFID technology. Said Davenport, "I am very optimistic regarding the role that RFID will play in our future. If pricing of the technology continues to improve, in my opinion, you will start to see more and more products [have it] add[ed] it to their item levels." As manufacturers continue to experience an increasing percentage of positive tag yields, more businesses will inevitably ride the RFID wave.

###