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Need Help? Ask An Expert

By JoAnn R. Hines, Chief People Packager



Expert - Someone who knows more about a particular subject than the average person. An expert is usually successful in the utilization of the knowledge that he or she possesses.

Sometimes just writing an informative or authoritative article or book can turn you into an expert. Other times an expert has studied for years to gain their knowledge. Whatever it is, it works. As such, experts are successful using and presenting this knowledge to others. People find an expert's information useful and helpful and return to learn more. One of the quickest ways to succeed is to find those who are already successful are doing and then do likewise.

Want to know more about getting answers from an expert, reply via E-mail with the word EXPERT at jrhines@womeninpackaging.org. Want some easy steps to get started? **Order:** How to become an expert in your field @ <http://www.packaginguniversity.com/pkgustorefront.htm>

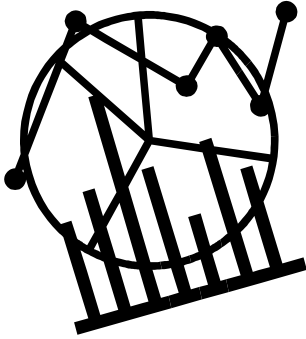
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The Confusion with RFID

By Dawn Burcham
FEATURED MEMBER

In the last several months we have been inundated with the magazine articles, web seminars, web notices of seminars and other communications talking about RFID tags. We have been reading about how large retailers and the Department of Defense (DoD) will be requiring manufacturers to have RFID tags on pallets and cases by January 2005. We have read about how expensive the tags are and will be, how the technology has many bugs with regard to the frequency being distorted by fluids and reflected by metals, how complex it will be to integrate the technology into current operating

systems. However, we have also read that the technology will greatly enhance inventory control management, reduce operating costs and possibly limit theft at the retail level.



This information is wonderful, but what does it mean to you and me right now today? What do we need to do right now? Which way do we go? To whom do we turn? Who do we believe? Who is responsible for each segment of the process? These questions are being asked every day.

Right now the companies that supply products to the top retailers and to the DoD need to address these questions and work within their company guidelines to make this technology work. The best suggestion is to turn to EPCglobal (Lawrenceville, NJ), for assistance. EPCglobal is a joint venture of EAN International and the Uniform Code Council charged with developing the RFID standards that we will all use. EPCglobal can assist with determining your company's retail or DoD requirements and make suggestions for using the process within your company's manufacturing functions.

For companies that are not facing immediate retailer or DoD mandates, you need to keep reading articles, attending seminars and watching what others are doing. Networking and sharing information will become imperative to make this process work and keep costs down. But why should you care about this technology if you are not being driven by your customers? The reason you should watch and learn about this technology is that it has some wonderful cost saving features for inventory management. If used properly, a company could begin tracking the exact movement of goods through its facility, see how many times the products are touched, see if they move through the facility efficiently, see how long product sits in inventory and when it is finally shipped to the customer. Since RFID tag scan store information such as product data, serial numbers, country of origin, date of manufacture, work numbers and even the customer's information if it is a product made specifically for another company/person, this information can be gathered in real-time as items move through the supply chain and analyzed to identify bottlenecks and other problems in the system.

Packaging engineers, commodity managers, freight forwarders, IT managers, and production personnel share a common interest in this technology. The packaging engineers will be responsible for the location of the tags on the master cases and making sure they are not damaged during transit. The commodity managers will be responsible for the procurement of the tags at a reasonable cost. The freight forwarders will be responsible for moving the pallets without damaging the tags. The IT managers will be responsible for the integration of the "live data" into existing systems. Production managers will be responsible for the labor issues and keeping these costs down. Everyone will be responsible to communicate and not lose track of what your company is trying to attain.

Overall, RFID technology can and will be useful to most companies no matter the size of the operation. Whether you are being pushed by your customers or are just keeping up with new technology, the move to RFID identification will assist your company with its bottom line in the future if not immediately.



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For more information on Packaging Career Hotline, email me at shellyn@womeninpackaging.org.

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