

Sort Through Government Complexity And Find RFID Opportunities

By staying abreast of governmental mandates, this VAR offers customized radio frequency identification (RFID) solutions and expects 15% sales growth this year.

Much has been written about the mandatory RFID requirements the Department of Defense (DoD) has imposed on its vendors. While the requirements are clearly defined, many companies balk at taking on the responsibilities the DoD has set forth and turn to outsourcing the process to a knowledgeable professional. For this reason, the number of VARs looking to capitalize on the DoD's RFID mandate is growing rapidly. An example of this can be found at Dun-Rite Packaging, Inc.

Dun-Rite Packaging has been helping its clients, many of which are DoD contractors; comply with government regulations since 1956. The packaging, marking, and shipping company was one of the first in its industry to use bar code labeling, and recently decided, to maintain its competitive advantage, it wanted to be at the forefront of the DoD RFID initiative.

DoD vendors must meet the shipping guidelines detailed in a document known as MIL-STD-129. Recently, a Defense Federal Acquisition Regulations Supplement (DFARS 252.211-7006) was created which adds an RFID component to the DoD shipping standards. The combination of MIL-STD-129 and DFARS 252.211-7006 cover everything from the placement of a label on a container to RFID readability requirements. While currently not being strictly enforced, a vendor's non-compliance can result in monetary penalties, shipment

delays, and even loss of contract. The deadline for compliance depends on the vendor's existing contracts with the DoD

. To address the upcoming needs of many of its clients, Dun-Rite contacted Datamax, a manufacturer of bar code and RFID labeling products, to find out more about RFID solutions. As part of a long-term partnership agreement, Datamax contacted VAR Winco Identification (WincoID).

Close Sales With RFID Seminars

“WincoID extended an invitation to Dun-Rite to attend a free educational seminar, hosted by WincoID and its partners Datamax and Symbol,” says Nora Rush, RFID product manager of WincoID. “The seminar touched on RFID basics, labeling compliance issues, and how to meet the DoD standards.” Following the seminar, WincoID visited Dun-Rite with an on-site demonstration of an RFID-capable printer as well as an RFID reader. “Through the interactive seminar and on-site demonstration, Dun-Rite found answers to their questions and a solution to the challenge of providing MIL-STD-129-compliant labels to their customers,” says Rush. At that point, Dun-Rite was ready to make the leap to RFID.

Understanding Dun-Rite's entire business process was the most challenging aspect of the installation. Prior to the new RFID implementation, Dun-Rite used bar-coded labels produced on a laser printer to mark DoD shipments. Employees would hand



write all label information, weights, and shipping information and fax it to the customer. The customer would manually enter the faxed information into the DoD system known as Wide Area Work Flow (WAWF). WAWF is a DoD-run online invoicing and receipt system. It allows vendors to electronically submit invoices, and the DoD to inspect, accept, and quickly make payments to those vendors.

WincoID's complete RFID solution included a Datamax H4310X thermal transfer RFID printer, a Symbol Technologies MC960R RFID reader, and Seagull Bar Tender label design software. WincoID created a label template using the Bar Tender label design software to create RFID labels according to the DoD specification. The labels contain the mandatory RFID tag as well as a visible 24-digit hexadecimal representation of the RFID tag, a traditional bar code, and human-readable text. Dun-Rite uses the Symbol MC960R reader to ensure compliance with the DoD specification by verifying that the RFID tag is functioning properly. Employees also are able to scan the labels with the Symbol reader and acquire all of the information in electronic format, to be e-mailed to customers for simple cut and paste into WAWF. This has reduced manual data entry errors and the time it takes to process an order.

"The overall benefit is that Dun-Rite is now able to handle customers' requests for MIL-STD-129 labels with the assurance that the labels are 100% compliant," says Rush. "This is a huge competitive advantage for Dun-Rite and one the packaging and shipping company hopes will show itself in the form of increased business." As RFID technology becomes more widely accepted and prices drop, WincoID is looking beyond mandate-driven adoption to using RFID in closed-loop enterprise applications where regulations aren't as important as finding the best solution.

References

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