

Matching Bar Codes With Tag Data

Accu-Sort and Intelletto have each announced products designed to automatically ensure that tag data correctly corresponds to the bar code printed on the label applied to a case and pallet.

By Jonathan Collins

Nov. 9, 2004—While many companies plan to write data to RFID labels as they are needed, many others plan to use pre-encoded tags, where the unique tag ID is associated with a specific SKU well before the label is attached to a case or pallet. That second option requires an automated way to ensure that the RFID tag data matches the bar code printed on the label being applied to those cases and pallets. Recently, two RFID equipment vendors—[Accu-Sort Systems](#) and [Intelletto Technologies](#)—have launched products to help solve that problem.

Consisting of RFID readers and software, Accu-Sort's new ASI Data Matching system works with a company's existing conveyor system that uses bar code scanners to sort items for inbound or outbound shipments. The ASI Data Matching system not only ensures that RFID and bar code data are matched correctly, it also brings RFID capabilities to a sortation system's bar code applications and equipment. According to Accu-Sort, adding RFID to an existing sortation system managing the flow of cases can also improve the sortation system's read rate-its ability to identify correctly each case or item.

"If the bar code system is delivering 98 percent read rates, adding RFID as well will deliver the 2 percent that is missing," says Troy Herman, ASI RFID solutions specialist at Accu-Sort, which is based in Telford, Pa. According to the company its new system has been tested up to 540 feet per minute with a 6-inch space between cases. Accu-Sort piloted its ASI Data Matching offering at an unnamed customer distribution center for five weeks this summer and is now offering the system to its existing customers looking to adopt RFID tagging capabilities.

At present, the system comprises a Symbol reader connected to Accu-Sort's own RFID antennas, which can be placed to surround any conveyor without the need to dismantle the conveyor. "We have designed an antenna so slim that it can sit between the floor of the conveyor and the conveyor belt. That means there is no need to remove the metal base of the conveyor to enable reads from the underside," says Herman.

When the ASI Data Matching system finds a case that has conflicting RFID and bar code data, the software can be configured to take any number of actions, such as redirecting the case for additional scanning, manual checking or adding an additional label.

Pricing for the ASI Data Matching system, which Accu-Sort can install and integrate with a customer's existing conveyor system, varies according to the scale and other deployment details.

Meanwhile, RFID appliance designer Intelletto Technologies says it is working on a UHF version of the RFID MultiPort Companion, an RFID reader that also provides bar code and RFID matching capabilities to automated sortation conveyor systems.

Released by Intelletto in September and featuring a 13.56 MHz RFID reader, the current version is 4-inch by 6-inch by 2-inch unit attaches to a PC and a bar code reader through a RS232 (serial port) connection and can operate at nearly 2 bar code/RFID reads per second. The RFID Multiport Companion can be used in any of four modes. The first mode reads RFID tags and translates the data into a bar code data format so that it can be used by an application that has been designed to accept data from bar code scanners; the second mode scans a bar code and then writes the data to an RFID tag; the third can check that bar code and RFID data on a single item match; and the fourth can encode an RFID tag with a time stamp and location data that can be used to track assets.

The current RFID MultiPort Companion model can read and write to 13.56 MHz tags based on ISO-15693, I-CODE1, Tag-it standards, but the new version, set for release within a few months, will not only operate in the UHF spectrum but will also be capable of faster reads and therefore be suitable for conveyor systems, according to Hassanali Namazi, president and CEO of Intelletto, which is based in Markham, Ontario.

Pricing for the current version the RFID MultiPort Companion starts at \$999.

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