

Domino Adds RFID Unit

The U.K. printing equipment developer has launched a division to help product manufacturers add RFID to their serialization marking systems.

By Jonathan Collins

Feb. 6, 2006—Building on its business supplying high-speed ink and laser printing equipment and systems for manufacturers, U.K. printing equipment developer [Domino Printing Sciences](#) has launched a division to help manufacturers add RFID to their product serialization marking systems. Product manufacturers use the marking systems to print serial bar codes on their products and product packaging.

Launched in November, Domino's new Integrated Solutions Group (ISG) has drawn employees from the company's five other business units. The group has already developed a system enabling [Pfizer](#) to add a 2D bar code to each EPC RFID label it places on bottles of Viagra distributed in the United States (see [Pfizer Using RFID to Fight Fake Viagra](#)).

"At Pfizer, we linked in our laser technology to print a 2D bar code representation of the EPC tag number on each container," says Simon King, director of Domino's Integrated Solutions Group. "The 2D bar code is required for redundancy."

According to King, as more and more manufacturers add RFID to their production lines, it becomes increasingly important that the EPC number encoded on an item's tag matches the existing product serial number printed or etched on the product.

While Domino's ISG unit will work as a system integrator to help manufacturers deploy RFID, the company says it is also working on software offerings that will link RFID and existing printing systems, as well as network RFID interrogators and RFID printer-encoders, across enterprise deployments. The company recently announced plans to invest £1.6 million in 2006 to develop the ISG group around the world.

"Our core skill is printing variable data onto products at high speed in the manufacturing environment," says King, adding that [Anheuser-Busch](#) uses his company's systems to print the date on bottles and cans of beer, at a rate of up to 2,000 items a minute.

At the Pfizer implementation, the RFID label is applied to the bottle and encoded with an EPC number, and the data is verified. The Domino system then takes a few milliseconds to read the tag's unique EPC number again and use a laser to burn a 2D bar code onto the surface of the RFID label.

According to King, Domino's new ISG unit will work with a range of RFID hardware suppliers and other system integrators to help manufacturers bring RFID into their existing production lines. "We are looking at RFID as another data carrier—no less, no more—that we can build into our manufacturing offerings," he says.

The company adds that it sees different demand for its new RFID services in the United States versus in Europe. In the United States, Domino says, it is beginning to encounter demand from manufacturers of

fast-moving consumer goods, such as food and beverage suppliers, for adding RFID to production lines. In Europe, meanwhile, the pharmaceutical and health-care industries—led by regulatory rather than retailer mandates—are showing interest in applying RFID in the manufacturing process.

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