

# Learn What RFID Doesn't Do

At RFID Journal LIVE!, end users who have done the hard work of launching pilots will reveal what RFID can—and can't—do for your business.

By Mark Roberti

April 24, 2006—I've been busy for the past few weeks, making sure we have everything in place for RFID Journal LIVE!, our fourth annual conference, which we're holding this year in Las Vegas, May 1 to 3. As part of my preparation, I had phone conversations with Jim Noble, vice president and CIO of Altria Group, the parent company of both Kraft Foods and Philip Morris; and Kevin Humphries, senior VP of information technology at Federal Express. These gentlemen will be the opening keynote speakers at the conference, and I wanted to touch base with them to discuss how I'll conduct the panel.

Jim made it clear that while Altria has put RFID to work in its operations—to combine the event's theme and the panel's title—the technology has not delivered everywhere. Kevin said the same thing. Therefore, instead of focusing only on the positives, I have encouraged them to talk about where RFID *can't* deliver benefits today, and even where it may never deliver benefits. This is as important for our audience to hear as the success stories where RFID can, and does, deliver.

The value proposition of *RFID Journal* has always been simple: Give people the information they need to make good business decisions. That means providing speakers who will be completely honest about where RFID can benefit a business today, and also where it can't. If you attend RFID Journal LIVE! and, after listening to Jim Noble and Kevin Humphries, decide not to launch a pilot in a particular area because there's no value in it, then I'll be happy. If you avoid wasting \$100,000 on a pilot that will never fly, but instead focus your deployment efforts on an area where RFID *will* deliver value, then the conference will have been a huge success.

I firmly believe our commitment to providing value to our audience is the reason we have attracted a stellar lineup of speakers who can speak knowledgeably and objectively about RFID. A lot has been made of Wal-Mart's using RFID to cut out-of-stocks by 16 percent. But how did the retailer do it? Did it change its business processes? Did it introduce new RFID-enabled applications or integrate data with existing applications? Is it using off-the-shelf middleware to filter data, or something it built in-house? Carolyn Walton, Wal-Mart's vice president for information systems, will answer these and other questions.

The U.S. Department of Defense has done extensive work developing the business case for using RFID in its operations. In fact, the DOD claims it can save billions of dollars per year using radio frequency identification. But exactly where—and how? Alan Estevez, the assistant deputy undersecretary of defense for supply chain integration, will shed light on this question and more.

More than 40 other end users will present case studies and discuss real implementation issues. Some are well-known leaders in RFID, such as Procter & Gamble's Dick Cantwell and Kimberly-Clark's Mike O'Shea. Others may be less well known, but they still have interesting hands-on information to share.

If you'd like to learn 20 ways to get rich quick, then RFID Journal LIVE! probably is not the right event for you. But if you would like to get real insight into where RFID is delivering value today and where it isn't, then join us in Las Vegas. You'll hear the truth from all of our keynote and guest speakers. You'll also get to stroll the 50,000-square-foot exhibit floor and see demonstrations of the technology solutions that savvy companies are implementing today.

*Mark Roberti is the founder and editor of RFID Journal. If you would like to comment on this article, click on the link below.*

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