

Manhattan Associates Gets RFID

The Atlanta software company will enhance its supply chain execution product to accept RFID data.

Jan. 14, 2003 - Manhattan Associates said yesterday that it will enhance its PkMS warehouse management system so that it can accept RFID data from tags and readers made by Alien Technology and Symbol Technologies. The Atlanta-based supply chain execution software company also announced that it has joined the Auto-ID Center.

"There's been a lot of hype for a long time, but we think that RFID has gotten to the point where it is on the cusp of taking off," says David Landau, Manhattan Associates' director of product management. "So we decided to start building our solutions for RFID so customers can see the significant difference it can make."

The company is using middleware to take data from tags and readers supplied by Alien and Symbol and pass it to software that automates the receiving of goods. Instead of having staff scan bar codes on pallets and cases arriving at a distribution center or warehouse, a company could use the system to automatically record the arrival of goods, which would boost productivity.

Manhattan Associates demonstrated a prototype of the application at the National Retail Federation show in New York yesterday. Boxes with Alien RFID tags were put on a cart and pushed through a gate with RFID readers. The tags, which carry the Auto-ID Center's Electronic Product Code, were read instantly, and the software immediately recorded that the goods had been received into inventory.

The company started with receiving, but it plans to add RFID capabilities to other areas of its warehouse management system this year, including put-away, picking, loading and shipping. Eventually, the company plans to add the RFID component to its collaboration and transportation management products.

"We decided to focus initially on warehousing because that's where some of the immediate benefits for customers will be," says Landau. "It provides fantastic productivity gains and much better visibility. But as RFID catches on, we will add the capabilities to our other products, particularly the collaboration software."

The Auto-ID Center's only other enterprise software vendor is SAP, and that is one of the reasons Manhattan Associates decided to become a sponsor. "As the only supply chain execution software company in the Auto-ID Center, we feel we can help define where RFID is going to go, what the standards will be and how they will be used," Landau says. "We bring a different perspective from a retail or consumer packaged goods company."

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