

Magicmirror Could Assist Retail Customers

Developed by Paxar and Thebigspace, the system includes an RFID interrogator and a mirror that displays product information.

By Claire Swedberg

Nov. 29, 2006—RFID technology company [Paxar](#) and merchandising-solutions provider [Thebigspace](#) have developed a system that would allow retail customers to use an RFID-enabled mirror to receive automated customer service while trying on clothing.

The magicmirror solution consists of RFID-related hardware provided by Paxar, plus a mirror and software from Thebigspace. It will be available to the international retail market this month, though Thebigspace director Frank Dekker notes that a version employing bar-code technology instead of RFID has been in use at [Debenhams](#) and other British retailers for the past 18 months, yielding a 5 percent increase in sales.

Installed in a dressing room, the magicmirror system incorporates an RFID interrogator linked to a mirror with an embedded digital display to provide product information to consumers. When a customer brings a clothing item into the dressing room, the interrogator reads the ID number on the garment's Gen 2 UHF passive RFID tag and sends that number to the store's database via a cabled connection. The mirror then displays a description of the garment, as well as other available colors and sizes, and suggests accompanying accessories. The magicmirror can also be used on sales floors, Dekker says.

One feature of the dressing room system allows customers to call a salesperson by touching the magicmirror. This sends a signal via a Wi-Fi network to a salesperson's PDA, indicating someone in a specific changing room needs assistance. A customer who has chosen the wrong size, for example, can follow prompts on the mirror screen and select the proper size.

"This provides the customer with a more interactive experience in the store," says Paxar U.K.'s RFID program manager, Pete Moylan. "You simply hold the garment in front of yourself, and the reader will trigger content on the screen."

In addition, retail stores can utilize the magicmirror system for inventory management, as well as for tracking items entering and leaving a dressing room.

Paxar, primarily a provider of RFID labels and printer-encoders, is supplying the RFID system integration and installation, Moylan explains, along with RFID interrogators from [Sirit](#). Thebigspace is providing the magicmirror itself, as well as its integration with the store database.

The solution is intended for such high-end items as high-fashion and sports brands. On average, he says, most stores will need to purchase a system with one or two interrogators, as well as a magicmirror, tags and software. Such a system will cost approximately £10,000 (\$19,450).

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U.K. store slated to pilot the system. However, he declines to name the retailer at this time.

In the meantime, a prototype mirror has been installed at Thebigspace's offices on Broadwick Street, in London's Soho section.

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