

Italian Stone Supplier Uses RFID to Track Marble, Granite

Bresciana Graniti employs passive 13.56 MHz tags to manage the production and distribution of the stone slabs it sells.

By Rhea Wessel

April 16, 2007—An Italian supplier of marble and granite has implemented RFID to track and trace stone slabs from the time they arrive at its factory until their delivery to the customer. Each tagged slab of marble or granite is photographed, and its photos are linked together with its tag unique ID number in the company's information system.

Bresciana Graniti, the stone supplier, is using a system implemented by integrator Zerouno Informatica. The passive 13.56 MHz tags, made by Lab ID, conform to the ISO 15693 standard. When slabs are delivered to Bresciana, they are photographed and tagged; the tag ID number is then collected with a handheld RFID reader and sent back to the information system via Wi-Fi. Tags are attached to a raw edge of the slab with special glue developed by Zerouno.

The company stores the slabs outdoors. It initially considered using bar-coded labels but decided against that because the slabs are subject to all sorts of weather and can remain in the yard for long periods of time. Such exposure would likely result in damage to the labels, rendering the bar-coding unreadable.

Using a handheld RFID interrogator from Datalogic to read a slab's tag, a worker can pull up basic information to share with sales prospects, such as dimensions, type of marble or granite, and sales status.

After a customer orders a slab, a worker goes to the yard to retrieve it. The slab is interrogated with one of four handheld RFID interrogators used in the application to confirm that it is, indeed, the type of slab ordered. The stone supplier is employing 60,000 to 70,000 tags a year for this application.

In the next step, the slab must be prepared for delivery. That preparation consists of polishing and other processes. The act of polishing, Bresciana says, would damage a bar-code label, making it unreadable—another reason the company chose an RFID solution.

RELATED_ARTICLES Bresciana Graniti is benefiting from the system because it can take inventory of its marble and granite supply much faster than it could before, when all tracking was recorded using pen and paper. Instead of three days, the inventory process now takes just one. In addition, Bresciana can provide information to prospects about available slabs much more quickly. The company says it has achieved an ROI, though it has declined to make details available.

"The implemented solution allows more accurate control of the whole production process and distribution," says Davide Giuradei of Zerouno's ID division. "It allows [Bresciana Graniti] to trace the material and

information flow throughout the process, contributing to the reduction of error and delays typical in manual management."

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