

Vue Technology Releases TrueVUE Mobile

The software makes it possible for vendor sales reps to take inventory of tagged items in retail stores and medical facilities at a fraction of the time needed for manual inventory-taking.

By Claire Swedberg

April 30, 2007—Item-level RFID software provider Vue Technology has released a mobile version of its TrueVUE RFID platform, known as TrueVUE Mobile, designed to enable the reading of tagged items in stores by means of a handheld RFID interrogator and laptop PC. The system will enable vendors' sales representatives to use the TrueVUE platform as they take to the road, making it possible to capture inventory in stores at a fraction of the time required when performing manual inventories. Vue Technology announced its new offering at the RFID Journal LIVE! 2007 conference and exhibition, being held April 30 to May 2 in Orlando, Fla.

TrueVUE Mobile, says Tim von Kaenel, the company's senior vice president for product and business development, was developed in response to a growing trend toward vendor-managed inventory in stores and hospitals. Rather than track the inventory themselves, retailers often give product vendors the responsibility of managing inventory on store shelves, in back rooms and on promotional displays. That trend has also taken hold at medical facilities, which often ask that pharmaceutical distributors, medical device manufacturers and other types of suppliers keep track of inventory. This is handled by the vendors' local sales representatives, who must frequently visit the sites and perform manual item counts.

If vendors have item-level RFID tags on their products, fixed RFID readers at a retailer's portals—for instance, at dock doors—can provide vendors some visibility regarding their products. However, the devices do not enable them to know which items are on the shelf and where, says von Kaenel, or if they may be close to their expiration dates. "Typically until now, the RFID infrastructure has been in the store, tied into the corporate infrastructure," he says. "Now, with TrueVUE Mobile, the power can be taken to the floor."

With TrueVUE Mobile, vendors will be able to automate their inventory management of tagged products, thereby reducing the time sales representatives spend in the store. Sales reps will be able to use any handheld RFID interrogator and a standard Windows-based laptop with an 802.11 wireless connection to upload RFID data to a central server operated by the vendor. This will give a vendor an immediate look at the inventory in each store its salespeople visit, as they scan the items there.

The system can also work as a stand-alone solution, with data from the handheld reader going to the laptop, where the TrueVUE software suite enables the salesperson to view products that are nearing their expiration dates, or that need to be ordered. The TrueVUE Site Manager links the laptop to up to three handheld RFID interrogators or printers, while the TrueVUE Essentials feature enables the laptop to provide inventory counts, alert vendors of imminent out-of-stocks and report expired items. The software also allows users to generate and send reports or e-mails to the store or vendor from the retail floor.

The system is capable of tagging items with a printer that prints RFID tags, allowing sales representatives to attach and scan those tags to enter them into the vendor's inventory management system.

By using the mobile system, von Kaenel estimates, sales representatives will be able to make three or four times more visits in one day than they do when counting items manually.

RELATED_ARTICLES Kimberly-Clark (K-C) offers a mobile solution for RFID tagging, known as OAT Mobile Tag, provided by [OATSystems](#). K-C is currently using this solution to track the deployment of its promotional displays (see [OATSystems Launches Solutions for Tracking In-Store Product Promotions](#)). OAT Mobile Tag includes a wearable RFID tag encoder, which K-C reps can use to tag displays lacking a tag, but does not provide any inventory-counting features. "Our offering provides remote tagging of an item not already tagged," von Kaenel says, "and it also can cycle count inventory and produce exception reports for products out of stock, all aggregated to [the vendor's] centralized system."

TrueVUE Mobile will begin shipping during the second quarter of 2007. By June or July, von Kaenel says, his company will make several case studies available to the public following pilots with retailers, which he declines to name. TrueVUE Mobile will cost \$6,995 and include the TrueVUE software suite, but not an RFID interrogator or laptop PC.

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