

RFID Delivers in the Apparel and Footwear Sector

Not only is the return on investment from the technology clear, but it can also be used to enhance the shopping experience.

By Mark Roberti

June 25, 2007—What I love most about my job as the editor and CEO of RFID Journal is delivering real value to our global audience. The most obvious value we deliver is showing end users how they can use radio frequency identification to improve the way they do business. That's why I'm so jazzed about our upcoming [RFID Journal—AAFA Apparel & Footwear Summit](#). Companies in the apparel industry are achieving benefits from using RFID—from managing raw material in inventory to enhancing the customer's shopping experience—and we have an unbelievable lineup of speakers who will objectively discuss how they're doing it.

Last week, we announced that Bill Holder, CIO of [Dillard's](#), will deliver the keynote address. Dillard's has been examining exactly where RFID can deliver value for the retailer—and where it can't. I met Bill at last year's summit. His approach to RFID technology is smart and practical—not pie-in-the-sky. He'll talk about where RFID can deliver a return on investment for retailers, and where it can't.

[Esquel](#) might not be a household name, but it manufactures high-end cotton shirts for some of the world's best-known brands, including Tommy Hilfiger, Hugo Boss, Brooks Brothers, Abercrombie & Fitch, Nike, Lands' End and Muji, as well as such major retailers as Marks & Spencer, Nordstrom and JUSCO. Esquel has been using RFID to track its cotton inventory and work-in-process. It has also been part of one of the largest Electronic Product Code trials, tracking goods moving between Hong Kong and China. The firm's CIO, Bridget Chan, will provide valuable insights about where RFID can cut manufacturing costs.

[New Balance](#), a privately held running shoe and sports apparel company, has been exploring how RFID data can be integrated with existing business systems to improve the efficiency and accuracy of receiving apparel samples. Frank Cornelius, New Balance's RFID project leader, will reveal the results of the initial pilot and explain why the company has taken the next big step of running an item-level retail pilot.

This year, two sessions will focus on how RFID can enhance the customer shopping experience. To appeal to younger, tech-savvy shoppers, designer brand [Nick Tentis](#) has integrated the RFID-enabled magicmirror (see [Magicmirror Could Assist Retail Customers](#)), as well as several other cutting-edge RFID applications in interactive dressing rooms, in its new London store. It is also using RFID to track inventory. In this session, managing director Nick Tentis explains the benefits the high-end designer brand has achieved, and how consumers react to an RFID-enabled shopping experience.

Neco Can, former CIO of Abercrombie & Fitch and J. Crew, will talk about using RFID to manage store inventory—and, more importantly, to enhance the customer experience. Neco is opening a store next month called Industry Standard, selling some of the hippest lines of youth clothing, and he's fully outfitting the store

with RFID to allow for "social shopping." As someone in the store tries on an item, an RFID tag (which is cut off at the point of purchase) identifies that item. The customer can share pictures and information, about the item with another individual remotely, via cell phone or PDA. That remote person can then send back comments. Neco will explain how the system works, as well as the costs and benefits.

In addition, attendees will hear why Lemmi Fashion, a German children's-wear manufacturer, adopted UHF EPC standards and implemented RFID within all of its operations and applications. They will hear about EPCglobal's work with apparel and footwear companies to develop data sharing, process and technical standards that will enable everyone in these industries to share EPC data about the movement of goods through the supply chain.

RELATED_ARTICLES As for me, I will do a presentation explaining how companies should handle privacy, a particularly sensitive topic in apparel and footwear. Attendees will also hear from several leading vendors offering RFID products and services specifically designed for apparel and footwear companies.

I'm excited to see these presentations, and I know those at the conference will get real insights into how and where RFID can deliver benefits to their companies. If we can help them save or make money using RFID technologies, the event will be a huge success.

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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