

AT&T Debuts Managed RTLS for Health-Care Organizations

The service includes the installation, management, maintenance and hosting of an RFID-based real-time location system that companies can use to track assets, patients and staff.

By Beth Bacheldor

Sept. 25, 2007—[AT&T](#) has rolled out an RFID managed service designed specifically for use in hospitals and other health-care organizations. The service includes the analysis, engineering, installation, management, maintenance and hosting of a real-time location system (RTLS) able to track patients, employees and assets.

This latest offering builds on AT&T's existing line of managed RFID services. In May 2006, the networking and telecommunications company teamed with [Intel](#), [BEA Systems](#) and [Symbol Technologies](#) (now a division of [Motorola](#)) to test an end-to-end hosted RFID service for several customers (see [AT&T Rolls Out Managed RFID Service](#)).

Then, in March of this year, AT&T launched three managed solutions (see [AT&T Expands Its RFID, Sensor Service Offerings](#)). These included Mobile Resource Management, designed for tracking vehicles and targeted at companies that maintain a fleet of trucks or vehicles; RFID Asset Visibility, which leverages Wi-Fi active RFID tags and software from [AeroScout](#); and a passive RFID solution for such applications as receiving and authenticating consumable products, as well as for inventory control.

The latest managed service for health-care organizations centers on Wi-Fi-based active RFID tags, but Tim Cunningham, AT&T's director of RFID business development, says the service can also include passive RFID systems and active RFID technologies that don't leverage Wi-Fi networking. "The RTLS space layers on top of our expertise with Wi-Fi networking," he explains, "but the reality is, in many of the projects we are working on, the solution crosses the layers between passive RFID and active RFID."

The managed service begins with an analysis of a hospital's current network and hospital infrastructure, the expected outcomes of an RTLS, and the specific items and/or people the hospital wants to track. From there, AT&T engineers work to design a solution capable of meeting the hospital's needs, then install the necessary hardware and software to provide ample coverage and location accuracy.

AT&T sources and supplies the RTLS system and tags, and provides ongoing maintenance and management of the system. The company will also work with the customer, Cunningham says, to integrate the system with back-end applications "so that they RTLS isn't just collecting raw data, but meaningful information."

RELATED_ARTICLES If the hospital so chooses, AT&T will host the collected RFID and location data at one of its many secure data centers throughout the country. "Some clients are looking for that level of security, so they are prepared in the event of a disaster," Cunningham says. "The real advantages of our data centers are the security and reliability of our infrastructure against earthquakes and other natural disasters. We have many layers of security from an infrastructure and networking perspective. We have the ability to

provide source and root authentication, and we can segregate data traffic. Just protecting data is something we are unparalleled in."

AT&T says it has already signed several health-care clients, which it declines to name at this time, for its managed service offering. These clients include one customer that is using the managed service to track equipment. Pricing for the RTLS varies, depending on the size and complexity of the implementation.

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