

The Buck Starts With CEOs

If RFID doesn't become a greater priority at the highest level, companies will never get the benefits that are possible.

By Mark Roberti

Oct. 1, 2007—Last week, I received an e-mail from a supplier to a major mass merchandise retailer, indicating he'd received a letter from his customer asking him to start tagging promotional items. This individual said he was coming to [EPC Connection 2007](#), the event we are co-producing this week in Chicago with [EPCglobal](#), and that he needed some advice as to which RFID tag suppliers could help him out, and which label applicators were best.

"I'm looking for the cheapest way to meet this requirement without slowing down our operations," he said.

I pointed him to the [exhibitor list](#) on the EPC Connection Web site. I also suggested he try networking with some of the top-tier suppliers already tracking promotions and achieving real benefits in the form of increased sales. He was surprised to hear these players are getting benefits.

And I was surprised that he was surprised.

It seems strange to me that people could still be unaware major players are getting significant benefits from RFID technologies today. But I'm immersed in it every day, and many people—even those managing RFID projects—have taken on RFID in addition to their day jobs. They don't have time to follow everything that's happening—from the emergence of new data-sharing standards to new applications being implemented at [John Deere](#) or [Metro](#) or [Matsui](#).

So how do we bridge the knowledge gap? Frankly, I think the answer is to go directly to the top. If CEOs understand the potential and have the technology on their radar, they will dedicate the resources and human capital needed to find and seize the opportunities to use RFID across their enterprises. If, however, CEOs choose to wait until the benefits are proved beyond any reasonable doubt, their companies will continue to lag behind competitors and not achieve the benefits that are possible today.

RELATED_ARTICLES I hope my e-mail correspondent and other attendees will learn, at EPC Connection, about some of the benefits their competitors are getting, and that they'll go back and convince their CEOs they need to focus on RFID as well. Unfortunately, I'm doubtful the CEOs will heed their advice. Some RFID project leaders have told me they've tried to share RFID Journal case studies with CEOs, but that the CEOs are too busy to read an entire article. What's more, the execs apparently don't believe the executive summary because they don't get enough supporting details to make claims of sales increases or cost reductions credible.

RFID Journal plans to run an article focused on CEOs in the January issue of our [print magazine](#). My hope is that CEOs will listen to other CEOs—that the top dogs might finally pay attention when they realize some of their savviest counterparts already have RFID on their radar and are keen to achieve the benefits. If you'd like a copy for your CEO when the story comes out, just let me know, because if RFID isn't being discussed in the

boardroom, it's probably not being deployed in the stockroom.

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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