

RFID News Roundup

Packaging manufacturer partners with IPICO to create tracking system for paper industry; Parco offers complete RTLS for rent; Avery Dennison licenses strap-attaching technology to Muehlbauer; Checkpoint Systems sponsors University of Arkansas' RFID Research Center.

Dec. 21, 2007—The following are news announcements made during the week of Dec. 17.

Packaging Manufacturer Partners With IPICO to Create Tracking System for Paper Industry

Sonoco, a provider of consumer and industrial packaging supplies and services, has announced that it has teamed with IPICO, a Canadian manufacturer of RFID labels, tags and readers, to develop and market RFID technologies for the paper industry. The partners have developed an RFID solution for paper cores—tubes typically made out of thick cardboard or paperboard, around which paper is rolled. The tag is incorporated into the paper core so the roll can be tracked from the paper machine winder to the point of use. The solution leverages IPICO's passive IP-X dual-frequency RFID tags. Sonoco says it chose such a tag because it's better equipped for paper's high carbon and water content, which can cause RF signal interference and data loss. The RFID solution is available now. "Sonoco can manually insert tags for customers today," says John Greaves, VP of IPICO. "Taking it a step further, we are now finalizing the manufacturing process that embeds the tag into the paper reel core when it is created, which eliminates the need to manually insert it into a completed core." This isn't the first deal IPICO has inked with a paper manufacturer; in 2006, Mondi Packaging announced it was installing an RFID system, codeveloped with IPICO, to track and monitor paper-roll consumption at its factory (see Mondi Uses RFID to Track Paper Rolls). The joint solution developed by IPICO and Sonoco leverages some of the work IPICO did with Mondi Packaging last year. "While the scale of the Sonoco project is much larger, our work with Mondi validated the technology," Greaves says. "The notable difference, besides the size of the project, is the process of embedding the tag in the Sonoco core."

Parco Offers Complete RTLS for Rent

Real-time location system (RTLS) provider Parco Merged Media Corp. has unveiled an RFID solution providing RFID tags, readers and installation training services for customers to rent. According to Parco, the leasing offer will be sold through resellers and directly to customers, and will cut the cost of each tag to between 8 and 14 cents per day. Ordinarily, tags cost about \$65 apiece in quantities up to 1,000, according to Scott Cohen, president and CEO of Parco. However, Cohen points out that the greater value for customers will be the overall savings for the entire implementation, including RFID interrogators—which, when purchased, cost about \$2,600 apiece. A typical installation for a hospital that wants proximity tracking requires, on average, about 45 readers. The solution leverages Parco's tags, which operate at the 6.5 GHz band and utilize ultra-wide-band (UWB) technology, whereby devices emit a series of extremely short pulses across a frequency segment wider than that used by conventional RFID tags. It also comprises Time Domain's Precision Location Ultra Wideband System (PLUS) components, incorporated into Parco's readers for more precise tracking. The offerings, known as Pennies Per Tag Day System Bundles, consist of the 8 Cents Per Tag Day package, including 750 Précis asset tags, which can be used to track assets to specific zones or wings within a building; and the 14 Cents Per Tag Day package, including 1,000 Précis asset tags, plus 24 SDP Ports (devices that enable precision tracking of tags to within about a 1-foot radius). Both systems come with up to 45 Précis Readers, as well as Power-over-Ethernet (POE) injectors that power the interrogators via a local area network, a Parco Software Site License, a product warranty, patch cables, installation, support, training

and asset-tracking software. The systems include all but the network cabling, network switches/hubs, Microsoft SQL Database and servers (a Microsoft server OS is required). Purchasers will have a choice of several asset-tracking software packages, which are scaled-down versions designed specifically for the Pennies Per Tag solution. The initial list of asset-tracking software options consists of the following: AIMS, from Phoenix Data Systems; Central Suites, from American Biomedical Group; TracPoint, from Sysgen; Critical Resource Management System, from BeanCounter Europe; RealTime, from Skyline Connections; and SYMX ATKAS, from SYMX Technologies. Users can customize the system by buying additional components and software. While the system can start as a tag rental program, a financing option makes it possible for a customer to purchase the system after the first year. Among the initial resellers is Trax Technologies, a supplier of products to the supply chain and logistics vertical markets, which is now installing the solution for a customer that, at this point, has asked not to be named.

Avery Dennison Licenses Strap-Attaching Technology to Mühlbauer

Avery Dennison RFID, a business unit of Avery Dennison that makes and markets RFID inlays through a network of label converters, has announced an exclusive licensing agreement with Mühlbauer, a manufacturer and consultant of turnkey automation solutions for the smart card, smart label and other industries. Under terms of the deal, Avery Dennison RFID will license its strap-attach technology to Mühlbauer for its TMA 15000 smart label strap-attach automation equipment. The patented strap-attach manufacturing technology creates RFID inlays by attaching prefabricated straps (a microchip and a connection element on a carrier sheet) to antennas. According to Avery Dennison RFID, this process allows inlay converters to create RFID inlays without the high accuracy and clean room requirements needed for attaching the bare microchip directly to the antenna.

Checkpoint Systems Sponsors University of Arkansas' RFID Research Center

Checkpoint Systems, a manufacturer and marketer of RF- and RFID-based solutions for identification, tracking, security and merchandising applications, has announced that it has joined the University of Arkansas' RFID Research Center. As a sponsor of the RFID Research Center's laboratory, Checkpoint says it will provide both financial support and equipment that can be used in the center's research and use-case validation projects. The center, part of the Information Technology Research Center (ITRC) at the Sam M. Walton College of Business, currently has more than 45 sponsors, including RFID technology providers and major end-user companies such as Wal-Mart and Tyson Foods. The center—a vendor-neutral, third-party testing and research facility that opened in 2005—is focused on the use of RFID and other wireless and sensor technologies in the supply chain.

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