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## Avoiding Obsolescence

Whenever any company invests in a new technology, there are concerns about obsolescence. No CEO wants to plunk down several hundred thousand dollars on a technology that is supposed to save money, only to find in three or four years that the technology must be replaced because the vendor went out of business, the proprietary system has been superseded by standardized technology or there is just better technology on

the market.

There are no guarantees—no matter how hard you try to find them—that the technology you buy today won't be obsolete in five years. But in our cover story, "Futureproof Your RFID System," John Edwards provides seven strategies to protect your investment in radio frequency identification technologies. One of the most important things any company can do is invest in standards. Standards guarantee—or virtually guarantee—that you are not locked into a single technology provider. So if the firm that made your RFID system goes under, other companies can provide tags and readers, and service your infrastructure.



Photo:

Tom Hurst

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Standards also tend to evolve in ways that ensure backward compatibility. The IEEE standards for Wi-Fi 802.11b and 802.11g, for example, are interoperable. A new wireless router based on 802.11g can communicate with an older laptop using 802.11b. Similarly, GS1 is developing an enhancement to the second-generation Electronic Product Code air-interface protocol that will be compatible with tags and readers using the current EPC air-interface protocol. You will have to upgrade the firmware on your readers to take advantage of some new features, but you will not need to rip out your old readers when the enhancement is published.

Edwards also explains other strategies to avoid obsolescence. An important one is to plan for a broader deployment. Too many

companies use RFID to solve a specific business problem, only to realize later that the system they bought cannot be expanded for other applications they'd like to deploy.

Planning is critical for financial institutions, which are beginning to deploy RFID to track and manage many different items. As reported by Jennifer Zaino in this issue's Vertical Focus, banks are using RFID to track storage media, such as backup drives containing sensitive data that could be stolen or misplaced. Some U.S. banks have adopted RFID to manage IT assets for Sarbanes-Oxley compliance. And banks in China, India and Europe are piloting or implementing RFID to track documents, money and other items.

Many construction, energy and manufacturing companies are interested in using RFID to automate processes to track and manage hand tools. This application can lower the cost of replacing tools, reduce the amount of time spent looking for tools and increase tool-utilization rates. In this issue's <https://www.rfidjournal.com/article/articleview/9737> Product Developments article, Mary Catherine O'Connor discusses some of the leading tool-tracking providers. As you consider their solutions, refer back to our cover story to ensure your tool-tracking system will be compatible with other a article, Mary Catherine O'Connor discusses some of the leading tool-tracking providers. As you consider their solutions, refer back to our cover story to ensure your tool-tracking system will be compatible with other applications you may want to deploy. This will help you futureproof your RFID system.



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