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Cubiq Uses RFID to Create 'Magic Closet'

Start-up Cubiq has announced its Cubiq On-Demand Concierge Storage Service, which uses RFID-tagged plastic storage containers, which it calls cubes. Each cube is about 24 inches long, 19 inches wide and 12.5 inches tall, with a volume of 18 gallons and a weight limit of 50 pounds. An Alien Technology

ultra-high frequency (UHF) EPC Gen 2 Squiglette (ALN-9730) tag is affixed to the container's interior and a bar-coded label is attached an exterior side. Customers contact Cubiq, which sends one of its "concierges" to the customer's home. The concierge brings the quantity of cubes requested by the customer, who then loads up the cubes and fills out a card identifying the personal items. The concierge uses a smartphone coupled with an RFID reader to take a photograph of each container's contents, scan the RFID tag and bar-coded label, manually enter the items into the Cubiq phone app, close up the container via a lid and a security seal and haul the containers to one of Cubiq's warehouses.

Customers can use a smartphone, tablet or PC to log into the company's website, entering their user name and password and then clicking through to see images of each cube they are renting, as well as a list and images of the contents within those cubes. "The idea for Cubiq was based on my own needs," says Michael Cappelletti, a Boston entrepreneur and Cubiq's CEO and cofounder (Scott Nelson, another Boston entrepreneur, is Cubiq's other cofounder). "When I moved into my condo in the Boston market, I realized there wasn't enough storage. That was compounded when I had kids."

Cappelletti, who still lives in a condo in Boston with his family, says he begin thinking about a "magic closet" that leverages RFID a while back but the tags and readers were too expensive and the readers were too bulky. But after he attended a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) wireless sensor technologies symposium, where he met U Grok It cofounder Carrie Requist, his idea began to take shape. U Grok It offers a compact UHF EPC Gen 2 reader that attaches to a smartphone, as well as associated software designed to help small and midsize businesses use their smartphones to locate, track and inventory RFID-tagged items located at the mid-range distance, generally 6 to 10 feet away from the reader, and as much 25 feet under optimal conditions (see RFID News Roundup:

U Grok It Raises \$600,000 in Angel Funding, Begins Manufacturing Smartphone UHF Readers). Cubiq leveraged U Grok It's open development platform, Cappelletti says.



Cubiq affixes an Alien Technology Squiglette passive RFID tag to each of its storage containers.

The use of both RFID and bar-coding provides redundancy, and Cubiq also uses security seals, or strong tamper-proof plastic ties commonly used in banking, healthcare and other sectors, to ensure each container remains sealed from the time it leaves the customer's premises to the time it is returned, according to Cappelletti. The company uses Alien ALH-9010 handheld RFID readers as a means to track cubes in the warehouse. When concierges are out for delivery and/or pickup, they use the Grokker, U Grok It's battery-powered RFID reader, plugged into a smartphone's audio port.

“We use RFID to record location information for cubes and all items that we store on behalf of our customers,” says Cappelletti. “RFID tags are used to record location [warehouse, rack, shelf and vehicle information] so that we can have real-time location information for all items in our care.”

The cubes are made of industrial-strength plastic and are actually shipping containers built for supply chain management and are commonly used in automobile manufacturing for part distribution, the company says.

Cubiq will store most any personal item that fits in the cube (as long as it isn't perishable, hazardous, illegal, flammable, or corrosive) and will also make accommodations for some larger objects such as skis and bicycles. The concierge will attach a bar-coded label and an RFID tag to each oversize item at the time of pickup. The warehouses are temperature-controlled and protected by 24-hour video surveillance, motion detection, numeric keypad or proximity card access, and require secure key access to individual areas once inside, according to the company.

One of Cubiq's customers is Lucy Cobos, cofounder of Pee Happy, an animal welfare group that sells dog-related apparel and donates the profits to local animal shelters. She had been storing her merchandise at her apartment in Boston, but as her product line grew, boxes of goods began piling up in her bedroom and blocking her windows. She credits Cubiq with giving her back her living space and courtyard view, as well as providing her with the ability to use her smartphone to check her inventory.

Currently, Cubiq is available only in the Boston metro market, but Cappelletti says his company will expand the service other locations. It offers three packages: small (four cubes, with a \$29 monthly fee), medium (eight cubes, \$59) and large (16 cubes, \$99). With each package, customers get one, two or

three free returns, respectively, per month to remove anything from storage and have it delivered to their home.

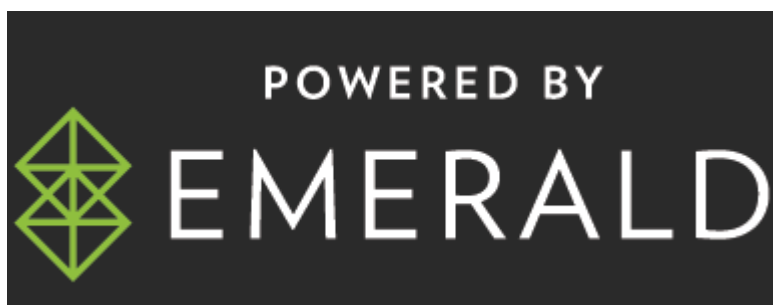
“Cubiq really is smartphone-accessible personal storage space that gives people more than just storage in a warehouse that they have to go to. This is storage in your pocket,” Cappelletti says.



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