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HID Global Takes Wide View for RFID Growth

- **The technology company is releasing new products that include customized tags for an expanding set of RFID technology applications.**

- **Some use cases include tracking fans at FIFA soccer events, fine whiskeys for brand protection, and wool bales through the supply chain.**

RFID technology is growing in sectors from auto manufacturing, to healthcare, to retail. For technology company HID Global, that means serving an expanding base of RFID technology applications with a multi-pronged approach through acquisitions and wider product portfolios with a wide range of RF technologies.

In fact, the dynamics affecting adoption trends vary depending on the application and the industry, said Richard Aufreiter, HID's VP of product marketing, identification technologies. Aufreiter stressed that there is no one-size-fits all when it comes to how the technology is being used. And growth is taking place for a variety of reasons depending on the application and user.

As a result, RFID asset tracking systems are in demand to replace labor-intensive and expensive processes for mitigating disruption and improving financial predictability and performance. The reason? They provide better predictability around equipment investment and maintenance schedules, and none of these adoption drivers are going away anytime soon, stated Aufreiter.

Growth Across RFID Frequencies

RFID is not a single frequency solution. Key technologies include custom and standard passive RFID tags across a variety of integrated chip options and all standard frequencies including LF, 13.56 MHz HF or NFC, and UHF RAIN RFID.

HID Global is selling tags across all these frequencies as well as building tags that meet specialty requirements.

One such specialty demand is a passive UHF RFID tag that can effectively track the movement of wool bales through the

supply chain. HID designed a custom tag known as the AWEX IQ Pro label that can be used for this purpose, said Aufreiter.

RFID Reader Gates at FIFA

On the reader side, the company recently launched the newest model of its TSL 3166 rugged handheld RFID reader based on the Impinj E710 chip. And to meet environmental challenges, the company has designed e-gate booster technologies to read at a greater distance, with a large volume of tags and people within the RF field. The reader with booster technology was used for crowd management at the men's World Cup in 2022 in Qatar.

In the active RFID space—where transponders are battery powered and long range, with the potential to support sensor data—HID specializes in Bluetooth Low-Energy (BLE) technology and, with the acquisition of RTLS company GuardRFID, it has added 433 MHz devices for use in tracking the location, and therefore the safety, of infants or wandering patients in healthcare settings.

For wide area coverage like construction yards, HID has begun offering low powered, long range LoRaWAN technologies.

Detecting and Preventing Counterfeits

When it comes to consumer goods and consumable items, HID's focus is solutions for on detecting or authenticating product quality and warranty.

Counterfeits, said Aufreiter, “destroy brand value, pollute the supply chain, and create a safety risk when a bogus product does not meet public safety and health standards.”

This counterfeit challenge can be solved by using RFID tags in an elegant way (that is often invisible to the customers), managed by using cloud-based authentication services and combined with smartphone NFC technology.

Tracking Expensive Liquor

In order to protect expensive bottles of whiskey, HID Global is providing a cryptographically secure HID NFC Trusted Tag. Each time customers tap their iPhone or Android device on the label, a secure channel is activated through a unique web link to verify product authenticity.

“This has the added advantage of allowing the whiskey company to improve customer engagement with secure, personalized messages to help build brand loyalty. In this example, there are multiple high-value drivers for growing RFID technology adoption,” Aufreiter said.

“Our standard or custom-designed Trusted NFC Tags are embedded into various types of consumer goods to give them unique and trusted identities,” he said, using authenticating coins and banknotes as an example. “This makes it possible to prove these products’ authenticity and a simple tap of a smartphone that enhances the user experience.”

Smarter Travel, Utilities and Cities

As the world depends on a more resilient electric grid, RFID technology is enabling wireless condition monitoring sensor solutions as well that minimize downtime in such mission-critical operations as hydroelectric power generation, according to Aufreiter.

Airlines are under increasing pressure to keep equipment up and running, and RFID technology enables them to constantly analyze critical systems, he said, to see whether they should be periodically replaced or how often they should be inspected.

And as smarter buildings become an important way to improve sustainability, RFID technology makes it possible to intelligently integrate people management, energy savings, access control and lower carbon footprints, simplifying LEED

and other environmental building certifications while generating a huge ROI.

To provide better access at workspaces, HID recently integrated employee badges in Apple wallets to enable touchless access control so staff and guests can easily access their corporate building spaces with just their iPhone or Apple Watch.

Expanding Versatility Now and in the Future

“RFID is an incredibly versatile technology that can solve unique business problems in a seamless and often invisible way,” said Aufreiter. “We will continue to solve challenges across an ever-growing range of RFID applications,” that includes providing visibility in logistics, maximizing oil and gas asset utilization and asset tracking to protecting hospital staff from workplace violence.

HID sees more use cases proliferating for automation and manufacturing, brand protection and anti-counterfeit solutions, condition monitoring, and asset tracking.

“Find the one, count the many, or measure the goal,” Aufreiter commented.

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