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## Learning From the Big Boys

I received an e-mail last week from a reader in Europe who complained that RFID Journal LIVE! Europe, our conference and exhibition being held in Amsterdam from Oct. 10 to 12, doesn't have enough content aimed at small and midsize companies. We do have a few speakers from midsize companies, such as John A. Hawkins, director of technology for pH Europe, and Dave West, operation manager of Worldwide Fruit. However, I do take the

reader's point. Since big companies are the early adopters, many of our speakers are from large companies. But that raises an important question: Can midsize companies learn anything from larger players?

The answer, clearly, is "yes." Large companies such as Marks & Spencer, Metro, Tesco and Gillette have the resources to invest early, make mistakes and learn from them. That paves the way for smaller companies to come in and apply the learnings of these early adopters. Even if they are deploying the technology on a smaller scale, they can still achieve benefits and avoid many costly mistakes.



The large companies that are among the early adopters have encountered many issues while running field trials and starting deployments—reader interference, problems sorting data, defective tags, hardware not well-suited to being deployed in a warehouse or factory and so on.

Moreover, the big companies have so far deployed RFID in only small areas of their business, so their experiences are directly relevant to midsize companies. And even as major companies develop sophisticated RFID systems to track millions of cases traveling through their global supply chains, much of what they learn will also apply to smaller companies.

For instance, all companies, regardless of size, will need to develop cost-effective ways to manage RFID data and integrate it into their back-end systems. Midsize companies may not have the same levels of data, but they will still need to deploy

Internet-based systems for sharing data with their supply chain partners.

Of course, not every solution developed by a big retailer or manufacturer will be useful to the smaller players. Many midsize manufacturers today don't use warehouse management systems developed for larger companies. But many applications developed for big companies will deliver value to forward-thinking midsize companies, including automated shipping and receiving, electronic proof of delivery, track-and-trace and so on.

If you are a midsize manufacturer looking to tag products for a retail customer, you can learn from the larger companies that started with a "slap-and-ship" approach. If you are a midsize retailer that wants to reduce supply chain costs, you can benefit from tracking reusable containers, the way Metro and Tesco have. If you are a midsize distribution company looking to track containers and other assets, you can learn how Volvo and Volkswagen have done it. And if you are a food producer, you can learn how Worldwide Fruit got a return on investment from its RFID project.

Those are just some of the case studies that will be presented at RFID Journal LIVE! Europe. Midsize companies will also benefit from seeing the latest products and services exhibited at the event. And many new products and services will be announced or launched at the conference. We plan to send out a preview of the major news announcements soon, so be sure to watch for it.

One reason *RFID Journal* launched an events business was to facilitate the sharing of experiences and learnings. I've no doubt that the midsize companies attending our conference next month will learn a lot and find the opportunity to network with early adopters invaluable. And as more midsize companies deploy the technology, we'll make a special effort to feature them online, in print and at our events, because the big boys

can learn a thing or two from them, as well.

*Mark Roberti is the founder and editor of RFID Journal. If you would like to comment on this article, click on the link below.*

### **Editor's Note:**

Last week, I mentioned that I had spoken to several end users who said, "Tags based on the first batch of chips from Impinj have a few minor issues that need to be addressed, but the performance is superior to Gen 1 tags, as expected." Impinj contacted me to point out that these "minor issues" have already been addressed, and that the version of the chip now in production has been certified by EPCglobal as conforming to the EPC Gen 2 specification.



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