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RFID Can Aid Green Initiatives

This year, *RFID Journal* introduced its newest RFID Journal Award—the Green Award—to highlight how some companies are employing radio frequency identification to reduce their environmental impact. Our winner, announced in April at RFID Journal LIVE! 2011, was Gruma Corp.'s Mission Foods

subsidiary.

Mission Foods, one of the largest producers of corn flour and tortilla products, provides nearly one-quarter of all tortillas sold worldwide, as well as wraps, salsas, snacks and other food products. Previously, the company shipped tortilla chips and other light food products in corrugated boxes that cost \$1 apiece. Mission Foods was spending more than \$5 million annually on boxes that ended up in landfills after only a single use.



In 2009, Mission Foods opted to replace the disposable corrugated boxes with reusable plastic containers that cost \$7 apiece. These containers each needed to be used at least eight times in order to justify the switch. The key to the project was tracking the containers with RFID, so that they wouldn't get lost, thereby leading to additional expenses.

During the planning process, Technology Container Corp. (TCC), which Mission Foods chose to supply the plastic containers, conducted a study of the economic and environmental savings that the food supplier could expect to achieve by eliminating the use of corrugated boxes at all of its U.S. facilities. TCC determined that over a five-year period, Mission Foods would save approximately \$15 million, as well as decrease energy consumption by 91 percent, eliminate solid waste by 98 percent and reduce greenhouse gases by 90 percent.

It took roughly seven months to develop, test and implement the solution at Mission Foods' Dallas warehouse. With its new tracking capability, the company's managers can now determine

at any given time which independent distributors are removing shipping containers from the warehouse, and when they are returned.

This week's featured story, *The Greening of Mission Foods*, explains how the system was deployed, and how it enables the effective tracking of containers without creating additional work within the warehouse. But I'll give you the bottom line: The system cost approximately \$100,000—including readers, tags and software—to RFID-enable three warehouses. Mission Foods has since averaged 20 turns per container, and estimates that it has saved nearly \$700,000 by eliminating the corrugated boxes.

Reducing corrugated boxes in the waste stream while saving money—that's how RFID helps businesses go green. Check out our featured story this week to read this compelling case study.

Mark Roberti is the founder and editor of RFID Journal. If you would like to comment on this article, click on the link below. To read more of Mark's opinions, visit the RFID Journal Blog, the Editor's Note archive or RFID Connect.



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