

RFID Is Not Just for Big Companies

Radio frequency identification has largely been seen as a technology for large manufacturers, retailers, transportation companies and so forth. That was true, largely because big companies typically have many more assets or product shipments to track and because they had the resources to deploy an RFID system and overcome any challenges that might have come up. Smaller companies with fewer resources felt the risks of deploying a system might be too great.

That has clearly begun to change. This week, our feature story (premium content) is about [Stoll & Co.](#), a small watch-repair firm with 62 employees, based in Dayton, Ohio. Stoll fixes some 120,000 watches annually. Business was good, but it was struggling to provide timely service to customers (primarily retailers and watch manufacturers) worldwide because everything was managed via manual processes (see [Small Repair Business Streamlines Processes](#)).



Granted, 120,000 watches might not seem like a huge number if you are [Walmart](#) or [Airbus](#), but each watch might go through as many as 15 different people as it is disassembled, cleaned, repaired, lubricated, timed, pressure-checked and reassembled. It was not uncommon for watches to become misplaced as they moved from one desk to the next. If this happened, workers had to carefully look through large numbers of individually bagged watches to find the one they should be repairing.

To solve these challenges, Stoll deployed a passive ultrahigh-frequency RFID solution, provided by [CD0 Technologies](#), to track watches from receiving through repairs. Since then, the company has integrated RFID technology into its shipping process, and it added a batch-processing application in November 2014 that can update the statuses of 50 to 60 watches simultaneously. The three-phase RFID project has transformed the company's business, according to CEO Ron Stoll, making it more cost-effective and his employees more productive. In addition, he notes, the ability to quickly identify each watch's location helps customer-service representatives update customers who call in to check on the status of their repairs.

I believe we're going to see more solutions like this. RFID is maturing rapidly, and as big retailers and manufacturers deploy solutions that use millions of tags and hundreds of readers, hardware costs will continue to come down. At the same time, software will become more sophisticated and systems integrators will become more adept at deploying solutions quickly and effectively.

I've always believed that RFID was a technology that would have broad application across industries, regions and companies of different sizes. If you've been thinking your company is too small to invest in an RFID system, perhaps it's time to take another look at the technology.

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](#).