



4 Benefits of Implementing RFID Tracking Solutions for Your Reusable Assets



Technology is developing at a rapid pace, changing almost every aspect of business operations. With distribution centers constantly searching for innovative ways to become more efficient, many are turning to radio frequency identification (RFID) technologies.

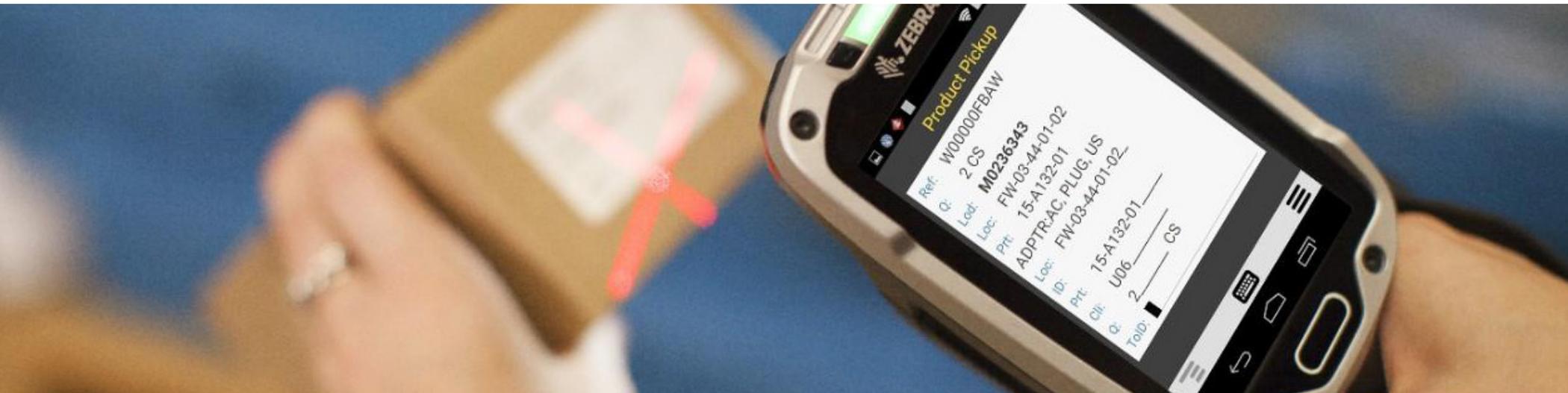
RFID technology provides real-time visibility via wireless communication between the RFID tags and antenna/reader infrastructure. Unlike barcode labels, RFID tags don't have to be within an employee's line of sight to be scanned and read. This enables higher levels of automation, further reducing costly labor and accelerating data collection processes.

While the cost of deploying RFID hardware has fallen dramatically over the past decade, many deployments have been hampered by struggles with managing the data generated by the tags, turning that data into usable business intelligence, and integrating RFID with existing inventory, asset, and enterprise resource planning systems.

Most organizations also lack experience when it comes to deploying and maintaining these widely dispersed IT systems. There are now software products and services available, however, that can simplify the design, deployment and management of RFID solutions – putting them within reach of organizations of any size, even those with limited IT resources and experience.

ViziTrace software from Advanced Mobile Group can enable this type of automation for work-in-process (WIP) materials, warehouse and distribution machinery, tools, IT equipment, files/documents, containers, and even employees or visitors using RFID-enabled badges.

Moreover, companies need this technology. The loss of reusable or returnable manufacturing and shipping totes or pallets costs billions of dollars per year across multiple industries. RFID tags, backed by intelligent and easy-to-deploy software, can reduce those losses by providing a real-time view of every asset.



Here are **four ways** that using RFID technology on your reusable assets can benefit your company.

1. Asset Visibility

RFID allows companies to perform complete inventory counts and to locate assets in much less time than manual methods or even barcode scanning. Fixed-position RFID readers can track inventory and assets as they enter and leave a room, loading dock, or facility. Handheld readers can be used to quickly conduct an inventory or asset check in seconds, even when there are dozens (or hundreds) of items in a location.

That enables companies to conduct more frequent inventory counts and achieve greater asset visibility. ViziTrace software and services give operations the ability to achieve up to 99% inventory accuracy using RFID – and to do so with a less complex and costly integration.

Using RFID technology and the ViziTrace solution, a company can automatically know what goods/ or assets have left a facility, floor, or room, and where those items went. With RFID, you will know the second the asset is received to the second it leaves the facility.

Being able to track totes and other reusable supply chain assets and know where they are in the shipping process is vital so that staff can prepare the next shipment. Applying RFID to reusable containers, tools, and other assets provides companies with a way to effectively leverage the technology in a closed-loop system, while also creating real-time tracking, work-in-process, maintenance, and other data that can be used both internally and communicated to external customers or suppliers, enabling end-to-end visibility.

ViziTrace offers Asset Validation features that will enhance your confidence of what is being shipped or received. Asset Validation is a comparison capability that allows companies to validate or compare packing lists, ASN, customer orders, etc. to the actual assets that have been counted automatically with RFID.





2. Proper Management of Assets

RFID tagging enables you to be notified exactly when containers (like totes, pallets, trays, WIP carriers, etc.) are returned. With manual or barcode-based methods, there can be significant delay between when the containers arrive and when staff are made aware that they've been returned.

If the shipping containers need to be sterilized or processed in some other way in order to prepare them for reuse, there is no way to know whether or not (or when) those processes have occurred. Without accurate data, the containers can't be used, items can't ship, and customer shipments are delayed. This can create additional scheduling problems across the supply chain.

With RFID and automatic alerts, all cleaning/sterilization processes can be tracked and logged. If a container hasn't been properly processed, staff can be alerted as soon as the container is scanned. Containers and other assets can be quickly and efficiently routed through the facility so that they are available for reuse. This helps optimize container utilization.

Likewise, RFID allows companies to know when containers are ready to be filled and shipped – there are no guessing games as to how many assets are available or where they might be stored. If you have 100 pallets of product, but only enough containers for 50 of the pallets, then the order can't be shipped. RFID helps ensure you always have the right number of assets and in the right location.

All of these processes can also happen much more quickly because the RFID tags can be scanned without a line-of-sight requirement. This makes the process quicker, more accurate, and easier to automate.

3. Increased Employee Productivity

Manual inventory and asset management processes rely on labor – a quarterly inventory count requires dozens of employees to count and record data, while other more important work grinds to a halt. With RFID, the technology does the inventory tracking for you. There is no more manual inventory tracking that requires walking, climbing ladders, counting, etc.

ViziTrace, for example, provides automation that enables 10x more efficient inventory/asset counting. And RFID software can automatically capture all of that data to generate built-in and custom reporting.

By eliminating all of the walking, counting, and manual data entry associated with asset management and inventory counts, companies can slash the time required for these activities by a significant amount and reduce hours of wasted labor. Employees can spend more time addressing customer service-related activities, and the productivity improvement and labor savings can go straight to the bottom line.





4. Loss Prevention

Reusable and returnable assets can help save money by reducing the need for ongoing capital purchases, but only if companies can actually keep reusing those assets. Often, shipping containers, totes and pallets are lost, stolen, or redirected within the supply chain by suppliers, customers, and logistics providers. This not only makes it difficult to ensure asset availability, but also generates significant costs as companies replace these expensive items each year and hold extra (and unnecessary) safety stock to help address shortages.

The cost of these losses can be steep. According to the Automotive Industry Action Group, the cost of replacing lost reusable packaging and pallets just in North America is roughly \$750 million per year. Total plastic pallet and container loss in the U.S. costs somewhere between \$800 million and \$1.5 billion annually.

Using RFID and real-time asset management software can provide “last known location” data for each of these assets, track them as they enter and leave your facilities, and generate automatic alerts when items have been in the field too long. This makes it easier to find those assets later and to provide greater accountability for supply chain partners that are responsible for returning them – they can be presented with date/time-stamped proof that the asset was last located in their facility.

There is little room for error when companies can track these assets 24/7. This helps eliminate theft and loss, improves security, and eliminates unnecessary container purchases.



Explore How RFID Technology Will Benefit Your Business

RFID is a fast developing technology that is becoming more and more mainstream in the distribution industry. With all of the different softwares on the market today, you want to ensure that you're choosing the one that is customized to your distribution needs.

With ViziTrace, companies can easily install an RFID solution and integrate with existing databases and other enterprise resource planning (ERP) point of sale (POS) and customer relationship management (CRM) solutions, as well as asset management and warehouse management systems. ViziTrace offers automated configurations to simplify deployments using automated application configuration and remote monitoring, and gain business insights using the embedded data and business analytics features.

As part of the ViziTrace offering, Advanced Mobile Group's experienced team of RFID experts can provide an on-site assessment to determine the unique requirements of your application, and then design a custom solution including hardware, software, and services. Most solutions can be implemented within 60 days, and Advanced Mobile Group offers full dedicated hardware and software support.

ViziTrace prides itself on providing the simplest, most effective RFID applications to maximize your business's assets.



About Zebra Technologies

With the unparalleled visibility Zebra provides, enterprises become as smart and connected as the world we live in. Real-time information – gleaned from visionary solutions including hardware, software and services – gives organizations the competitive edge they need to simplify operations, know more about their businesses and customers, and empower their mobile workers to succeed in today's data-centric world. For more information, visit www.zebra.com.

About ViziTrace

ViziTrace™ is an enterprise-class RFID visibility platform from Advanced Mobile Group that makes it simpler than ever for any business to implement RFID quickly and effectively. This platform reduces human effort and error and gets you on the fast-track to deploying RFID with pre-built interfaces, handheld apps, highly configurable software and dependable performance.

