

Raising the Bar in Global RFID Solution Standards



Overview

A well-established and globally branded US manufacturer of sportswear, home furnishings and accessory products was in the preliminary stages of deploying an RFID tagging program in compliance with their largest wholesale customer — a prominent US department store chain who is also our customer. The initiative required RFID tagging solutions and services in both Asia and the Americas for the launch of 6 million units, about 12.5% of their total annual unit sales.

Business Challenge

The manufacturer's marketing department was disappointed with the existing RFID tagging solution they had received from one of our competitors as sizing was not suitable and the print quality, look and feel were quite poor. We were asked to address the following problems:

1. Tagging solutions required options for imprinting variable data and color-by-size in multiple locations globally.

2. RFID tags needed to match the overall finished size and quality of the existing Universal Product Code (UPC) price ticket, while inlays for production use were to comply with their wholesale customer's inlay retail requirements.
3. The manufacturer requested our support on value-added services of RFID imprinting and encoding at their USA distribution center.

Our Solution

Understanding our competitor's failures, our RFID experts requested the opportunity to review and provide an enhanced tagging solution for the manufacturer. We thoroughly analyzed the existing RFID tag samples along with original art files, UPC data files and the overall business scope before determining the best alternatives.

Based on the manufacturer's global production, planning and sourcing models, we recommended that two tagging solutions should be incorporated:

1. Offset front with digital variable back, in sheet form.
2. Flexo/rotary front and back for thermal imprinting and encoding at customer or SML service bureau, in roll form.

For the first solution, the offset quality was a best match for the manufacturer's printing quality. Additionally, digital printing is more flexible, saving time and running color-by-size as the digital press allows for color adjustment quickly in the run. The second solution tailored to the manufacturer's specific distribution center and factory needs.

After designing more suitable solutions that more accurately met the manufacturer's needs, we also ensured that the print and paper qualities were up to their standard. We identified a paper globally available in sheet and rolled form that achieved the feel and print quality expected of the manufacturer, and we committed to a sizable investment in order to procure this specialty paper for them.

We produced tagging from our China and USA RFID factories, incorporating two RFID inlay options for consideration. We then provided multiple sets of finished samples, imprinted and serialized, for the manufacturer's internal and wholesale data integrity testing requirements, all samples passing.

Upon the launch of the program, we established all factory vendor set up and RFID product order trainings ahead of production to ensure the program ran as smoothly as possible.

The Results

We provided the manufacturer with RFID tagging solutions that met their marketing and production needs, ultimately meeting the complex compliance requirements of the manufacturer's wholesale customers. The manufacturer saw increased value and service in an efficient tagging solution that is leading to long-term operational savings and much greater efficiency. For instance, by using offset front and digital back, they are now able to run multiple color-by-size in every production, no longer needing to spend time on holding roll color by size stock inventory to accommodate orders. This solution is a cost effective model for managing the unpredictable forecast and delivering color-by-size tags with a shorter lead-time.

We provided the right service while matching the price of the first supplier. After their initial success, the manufacturer then provided seasonal/quarterly projected usage by region and initiated base sheet inventories for regional service bureau ordering by factory. We have positioned ourselves to review expanded tagging and software solution opportunities, allowing the manufacturer to consider tagging all globally produced units as well as software and system deployments in both the supply chain and owned retail operations.