

in this issue

1

Dispelling the Myths of Wal-Mart's RFID Initiative

2

Preventing Malicious Spyware or Adware from Hijacking Your Computer

3

How to Develop Charisma: Twelve Key Moves

4

Finding the Perfect Fit: Choosing the Right Time & Attendance System

•

Accountant's Tips

January 2005 - Vol. 01-05

Dispelling the Myths of Wal-Mart's RFID Initiative

WAL★MART

Nov. 29, 2004 -- Public perception of the Wal-Mart RFID initiative does not conform to real life. Wal-Mart mandated that by January 2005 its top 100 suppliers must apply passive radio frequency identification (RFID) tags based on EPCglobal standards to cases and pallets headed for three specific distribution centers in Texas. But that deadline was never meant to be hard and fast.

"We challenged suppliers to see how much they could tag," says Gus Whitcomb, a spokesperson for Wal-Mart. "Could they hit the 100% mark? They were then asked to come back to us with a tagging plan, indicating what they reasonably thought they could do, given the way their supply chain works and the availability of technology at the moment."

"From the beginning, Wal-Mart has taken a stance that allowed time for companies to educate themselves," says Erik Michielsen, director of RFID and ubiquitous networks at ABI Research. "Wal-Mart understands that there are still issues remaining -- hardware supply, standards, and the learning curve with the technology -- and that it's going to take time. They want to give room for companies to get a better handle on RFID, allow [Electronic Product Code] standards be resolved, and let the hardware and software companies roll out more available, capable, and interoperable products."

Negotiations between Wal-Mart and its top 100 suppliers bear this out. A recent study of RFID deployment practices conducted by the ARC Advisory Group found that suppliers negotiated a wide range of agreements with the retail behemoth. "One large supplier will be shipping over 700 stock keeping units starting on January 1. But many other companies -- even very large companies -- will be shipping less than a dozen."

Wal-Mart has also granted deferments to its deadline, based on extenuating circumstances. "One company that we talked to had a good reason for not starting on January 1, and so they will not begin RFID tagging until mid-2005," says Steven Banker, service director for supply chain management at the ARC.

"Wal-Mart didn't expect this battle to be won by January 1, 2005," says Michielsen. "What it did was create an incentive structure that pushed its partners in the market to better understand the technology while standards were being developed and innovation was taking place. Wal-Mart's goal is to get companies to integrate this technology into their changing business processes."

"In January, we are expecting an aggregate of 65% of all cases and pallets from the 136 suppliers -- because two have gotten extensions -- headed to those three distribution centers," says Whitcomb. "We are working with the suppliers to increase that because we would love to get it to 100% in the long run. But the reality is that some suppliers are going to be doing 100%. Others have complications brought on by how their distribution center system works, and they will be tagging less."

The increased flexibility shown by Wal-Mart with suppliers allows companies to better frame the task at hand. Wal-Mart is trying to get commitment from its suppliers while also outlining long-term goals.

"A lot has happened in 2004, but more needs to happen before companies can push out seamless RFID solutions integrated through the enterprise," says Michielsen. "More time is needed to allow integration service organizations to staff up RFID teams -- organizations like Accenture, Deloitte, and IBM."

Preventing Malicious Spyware or Adware from Hijacking Your Computer

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) announced that it had used existing fair trade laws in asking a federal court to shut down some of the leading distributors of malicious “spyware” or “adware” software. This type of malicious software may be lumped with viruses, worms, and sp@m, and is all referred to as “malware” - short for malicious software.

What Are Spyware and Adware Software?

Spyware and adware are software that is installed on your computer, generally without your knowledge, that monitors or controls your computer’s use. The software may send pop-up ads, redirect you to an un-requested website while you are on the Internet, monitor your Internet activity or record your keystrokes while you are online. This recording of keystrokes may lead to identity theft or credit card fraud. The terms “spyware” and “adware” are the essentially same type of software. They are software that you may not be aware of running on your computer.

The online marketers who distribute this type of software maintain that you have downloaded the software to help them better service your Internet marketing needs. They would also state that you received their software as part of another free software package that you downloaded and installed. Lastly, that during the download process, that you clicked on the “agree” button, where there was their statement that you would accept online pop-up ads for their advertised products. This same software that have victimized individuals with a mysterious change in their opening Internet page, a new default search engine, an avalanche of pop-up ads while online, computer slow downs or a computer crash - know the software as spyware.

Spyware Distribution

Regardless of what it is called -- your computer is infected just the same. Simply clicking on a banner ad can install spyware software. Worms, which are self-propagating viruses, can also carry spyware. They search for machines that don’t have up-to-date security patches and install their crippling software. Spyware may also be distributed by email. Common method of installing spyware is a message saying you need to download ActiveX to view a website or email note. Don’t do it! It’s just another method to get you to click yes to their adware.

Sometimes the presentation is an outright counterfeit of a Microsoft agreement or some other recognizable document. A safe rule to follow: If you’re not sure what it is, don’t click yes. Cancel out of the program any way you can, even if it means rebooting your computer.

Unlike virus writers, who mainly want to infect as many computers as they can just so they can brag, spyware distribution firms have a financial incentive to have their software stay on your computer as long as possible. The more of their ads that they load onto your computer screen, the more likely that you will click on one of the ads.

Is Your Computer Infected?



To eliminate spyware, you must track down every file and completely erase it. That can be tough since spyware hides inside your computer’s operating system, making it difficult to find.

If you suspect that your computers is infected and want to search the Internet for an “anti-spyware” solution -- be careful.

A Google search will return over 1,500,000 results for “anti spyware software”. You will get about 749,000 hits for the phrase “anti-spyware software”. Some companies that offer anti-spyware software solutions also make spyware software. Who else would know how to remove spyware then the makers of spyware software? Their anti-spyware software may remove a version of spyware on your computer but discretely load a more current version of their spyware to be launched in a few days after you had thought that you had cleaned-up your spyware problem on your computer.

You may download three free spyware cleaning programs at: Ad-Aware, Spybot, CWSshredder

Before you run any of these, use their automatic update feature to get the latest protection. Some users report better results when they make repeated passes with each of the three programs.

If your computer is so bogged down with spyware, you may have trouble downloading the anti-spyware products before your computer crashes. In that case, you may have to obtain the programs from another computer with a CD burner, and then load the software onto your troubled computer using a CD.

Ongoing Anti-Spyware Protection

To prevent future infections, don’t click on any pop-up ads or the body of any sp@m emails. Try closing unwanted pop-up ads using Alt-F4 in Windows. The Alt-F4 is a keystroke combination that decreases the risk you’ll click on a disguised button to close a window that will actually open another window.

Keep your computer up to date with the latest security patches. Microsoft offers free updates and free CDs can be ordered for users on slow-speed dial-up.

Windows recently announced the release of XP’s Service Pack 2, which provides additional security measures such as a limited spyware blocker and a firewall.

Protection is an ongoing process since spyware makers are constantly creating new threats. You may download a good computer resources manager and security manager at OnlineSoftwareGuide.com.

Install a personal firewall. ZoneAlarm from Zone Labs has a free basic firewall for personal use. Symantec and McAfee sell popular personal firewall, anti-virus, anti-spyware software.

Next, set the computer’s operating system for daily security updates.

Also set the Web browser to a medium or high-security level. For Windows, go to Microsoft’s Web site for instructions. Windows XP users should install Service Pack 2, which makes it close to impossible for software to be downloaded without you being alerted. Consider switching to a browser less popular than Internet Explorer, such as Mozilla Firefox or Opera. They are less likely to be attacked.

**For more information
please contact ISI.**

How to Develop Charisma: Twelve Key Moves

You've seen them. People like John Edwards or Carly Fiorina whose personal magnetism makes them stand out and propels them up the ladder of success.

But is charisma -- that powerful personal magic that attracts people and promotions like a magnet -- something you are born with or something you can learn?

It's common knowledge, for example, that the late president John F. Kennedy exuded charisma. Yet historians say his style was so carefully rehearsed that before running for president he even commissioned a study to determine the most effective handshake!

Those who study the phenomenon of charisma say while some people are innately more charismatic than others, there are certain things everyone can do to boost their charisma quotient. Debra Benton, author of *Executive Charisma: Six Steps to Mastering the Art of Leadership* offers the following pointers:

Expect acceptance.

Regardless of rank, expect to be treated as an equal. If you expect acceptance, you just might get it. If you don't expect it, you definitely won't get it.

Control your attitude.

Success in business is based more on mental attitude than on mental capabilities. Be optimistic toward yourself, others and life. Walk in to a room with a spring in your step and a smile on your face.

Perfect your posture.

Pull your ribcage away from your pelvis, roll your shoulders back and down, pull your stomach in and tuck your bottom toward your spine. Breathe deeply. You'll not only look better, but feel more energized, alert and in control.

Think before you talk.

Think fast, pause, then speak purposefully. One CEO practices saying everything to himself before he says it out loud so that he will hear how it sounds and can change it if he needs to.

Slow down.

Speed in speaking, moving, gesturing and walking looks nervous and scared. Scared people get passed over, not hired or promoted. Learn to speak in a comfortable, easygoing and welcoming way. Don't waste time, but do speak as if you have all the time in the world for those you are speaking to.

Shoot straight.

Everything you say or write can be done in a simple, straightforward manner. Just do it.

Be a good storyteller.

People understand you better, remember what you say longer, and find you smarter and more interesting if you use anecdotes to make your points.

Be aware of your style.

Clothes don't make the man but they do make a difference. Wear well-tailored, good quality clothes that make you look like you are in charge. But remember, it isn't as much about your look as how you look at things and what people see when they look at you.

Admit your mistakes.

If you are error-free, you're likely effort-free.

Don't be bullied.

If you are unjustly criticized, don't take the bait and get into an argument. Instead calmly ask: "Why do you think that?" "What do you mean?" or "What's that based on?"

Be flexible.

Be able to stand out while still fitting in with the crowd.

Be at ease with yourself and others.

Look others straight in the eye, eliminate any defensiveness and take the edge off your voice. Never let them see you sweat!

Finding the Perfect Fit: Choosing the Right Time & Attendance System

Successful companies are continuously looking for ways to make their businesses more efficient. Since labor costs are often the single largest expense, an effective Time and Attendance system may be just the way to accomplish that goal. So how does a company choose the right system to maximize ROI and efficiency? Here are three tips to get your started.

Understand the Basics

Understand that there are two basic functions a Time and Attendance system should perform: first, automating the collection and management of employee time and activities, and second, improving the company's ability to allocate its labor resources. If you keep these two central goals in mind, you'll stay on track during your research...which brings us to the next point.

Research

Smart consumers educate themselves. Since there are literally hundreds of Time and Attendance vendors, it may be a daunting task to weed out those solutions that don't suit your needs. But taking the time to do some preliminary research to decide which companies you want to contact will make the job easier in the long run. The Internet is a good place to start.

Make sure you explore each company's 'full package', which includes hardware components, software, accessories, support, partners and scalability. Look for a system that meets your requirements now, but don't forget about the future: find a vendor whose systems are adaptable and can change and grow when your company does. The modular-component approach taken by some vendors is ideal, enabling simple adaptations and modifications to the system to meet the changing needs of their customers.

When deciding on hardware, select a vendor that uses non-proprietary language so that the hardware can communicate with any software you select, both now and in the future. And look beyond compatibility with just Time and Attendance software; down the road, you may want to integrate Job Costing, Shop Floor Data, Payroll, HR or other software applications. Having to replace the hardware to accommodate those future needs would greatly reduce the ROI and eat into the savings the system was designed to yield, so getting it right the first time is critical.

Establish Criteria and Questions Once

you have completed your research and narrowed the field, create a checklist of the features and functionality that your Time and Attendance system must have. Do you need Access Control, to restrict entry to certain areas of your facility? Will you use the system for Job Costing or Shop Floor Data Control? If you know what you're looking for, it will be easier to identify the vendors that fit your needs.

Make a list of questions to ensure that each system you are investigating does, in fact, meet your criteria. Don't forget to consider how you'll capture the employee data that will populate your new Time and Attendance system. Some questions you may want to take into account are:

Will you need data collection equipment, or are your employees entering data through existing PC's or workstations?

Will your employees have badges or cards for swiping, or will you opt for a biometric fingerprint identification system, which can be used without badges or PINs, and can increase security, as well?

Ultimately, the system you pick is an investment in your company's bottom line, so choose wisely – finding the perfect fit will pay off in the long run.

Accountant's Tips

2005 Standard Mileage Rate

The IRS has announced that beginning January 1, 2005, the optional standard mileage rate for business use of an automobile will be 40.5 cents per mile. The mileage rates for charitable driving will be 14 cents, and 15 cents per mile for medical deductions.

Increased Retirement Contribution Limits.

The changes for 2005 are as follows:

- The maximum IRA (traditional or Roth) contribution increases from \$3,000 to \$4,000 per person.
- The maximum 401(k) and 403(b) employee contribution increases to \$14,000.
- The maximum SIMPLE employee contribution increases to \$10,000.

Taxpayers who are at least age 50 before the end of 2005 can increase their contribution limits by the following amounts for the following plans (called the catch-up contribution limit):

- An additional \$4,000 for 401(k), 403(b), salary reduction SEP plans, and 457 plans.
- An additional \$2,000 for SIMPLE plans.

Higher Income Limits for Deductible IRAs. If you are covered by a retirement plan at work, you can take an IRA deduction if your modified adjusted gross income is less than \$80,000 (married filing joint) or \$60,000 (single or head of household).

Increased Section 179 Expense Deduction. The maximum amount increases from \$102,000 to \$105,000.

Additional First Year Depreciation. The bonus depreciation allowance of 50% expires for qualifying property purchased after 2004.