

VARs and Label Converters as RFID Sales Partners

If RFID labels were simple, they probably wouldn't be called "smart labels."

If you sell RFID solutions, we hope to share our perspective that our business will do better – and serve the customers better – by being true solution partners. If you do not sell RFID, this week's RFID Street will be less relevant. But I hope your take-away is to make sure any solution provider you select has a strong relationship with their label makers.

VARs and system integrators who work with RFID label converters hopefully carry reasonable expectations for this working relationship – a careful process for setting RFID label product requirements; straightforward ordering; and expedient fulfillment.

But VARs and system integrators can expect a lot more from their RFID label converter, and here are four things you should expect a good RFID label converter to do help you sell more and add value to your projects.

First, the dynamic nature of RFID work requires you to have clear expectations for product testing roles and responsibilities in order to keep projects on their timeline and, ultimately, delivers on the promise to the customer. While you need to be prepared to deal with all aspects of your RFID implementation, an experienced label converter is going to be able to support your work to develop the best solution, including testing in the lab and in the customer's environment.

The custom conundrum

Second, ask your existing or potential converter partner about pilot projects – producing custom, prototype labels or tags for a new or unique application. Their ability to develop new forms of RFID tags and labels to your customers' specifications is a very strong selling point.

While you and your customers certainly gain from the converter's willingness to experiment, note that the converter often gains from this venture, too. In the end, they often have a new product which can address new markets and may be able to support your ongoing work with similar customers. And, clearly, everyone gains from the broadening of the applicability of RFID labels.

On the other hand, don't jump too quickly at creating a custom solution. With more and more established, proven inlays and antennas on the market, there is less and less reason to go custom. "Don't reinvent the wheel," is tired and true advice here. Some manufacturers offer more than 50 different inlays, which is where the customization primarily comes into play. So with hundreds of existing solutions, the suggestion by a

converter you don't know well to "go custom" might also indicate their lack of knowledge of what else is available.

Third, let's address something basic: sales collateral. Does your converter have product information that can help you close sales? Useful assets include unbranded product descriptions with photos and case studies. Generic samples are very important, too. If they don't have these on hand, will they create them for you?

New business from converters

Finally, an ongoing partnership with a converter can directly support your sales channel. When the converter knows your capabilities – your products, services, geography and industry specialties – they can help you in various ways. Think about how to involve them in the standard elements of a channel relationship – inventory, pricing and other benefits.

Why not ask them what new customers they can bring you? Established label converters get leads directly from end users they work with in other capacities. Sometimes those same non-RFID customers are prospects for an RFID implementation, if your converter-partner knows what to look for. The converter's clients may need support from an integrator on various real applications.

In summary, a good RFID label partner to help you sell more and add value to your projects. VARs and integrators should expect RFID label converters to support sales through their RFID expertise, flexibility in meeting customer requirements and ability to close leads.

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