

RFID Deployment Interview



Mr. Robert Bacon
Program Director, Navy AIT
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To meet its objective of providing the best logistical support to Sailors and Marines, the United States Navy actively seeks new technologies and process improvements to streamline operations, and recently expanded its use of passive RFID (pRFID) at the Naval Base Pearl Harbor and Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe Bay. XIO Strategies has supported this work by providing business process and supply chain subject matter expertise in support of the Navy concept of operations (CONOPS) development in emergent AIT technologies, including RFID, and has been a part of the Navy's Oahu pRFID initiative.



We asked Mr. Robert Bacon, Program Director of the Navy AIT Office, to provide an overview of the project and share his view of the benefits and challenges surrounding this mission-critical RFID initiative.

- 1. Please explain the primary incentive for the Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP) to pursue the Oahu pRFID initiative, including sites at the Naval Base Pearl Harbor and Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe Bay.**

Response: We have been evaluating various types of AIT (*Automatic Identification Technologies*) for years through pilot programs and other testing. Based on these efforts, we are convinced that pRFID can provide Navy with meaningful improvements in our operations. By using pRFID, we are able to provide very discreet levels of asset visibility to our Sailors and Marines.

The Oahu project was really an idea developed by TRANSCOM. As you know, TRANSCOM serves as the DoD Distribution process owner for DoD logistics. In this role TRANSCOM had selected Oahu as a key logistics site for the consolidation of inventory among the various services – in a project called the Joint Regional Inventory Material Management Initiative (JRIMM). In conjunction with this project, TRANSCOM requested that the services deploy pRFID at our logistics operations on Oahu.

- 2. What attributes made Oahu the right location for this project?**

Response: Primarily because of Oahu's inclusion in the JRIMM effort but also due to the compact geographic nature of the island. We are able to deploy pRFID technology at Navy and Marine sites while working closely with our services members in Army, Air Force and DLA (*Defense Logistics Agency*) as they deploy at their locations on Oahu. In doing so, we have created a fully instrumented geographic location.

- 3. What technologies were used for the project?**

Response: Navy has selected a COTS-based solution and is using Alien 9800 readers and Globe Ranger iMotion software. In addition we are deploying Psion TekLogix handheld readers at both Pearl Harbor and Kaneohe Bay.

- 4. Would you please provide a brief overview of the facilities and how RFID was incorporated into operations?**

Response: We installed portals at the Pearl Harbor Shipyard receiving warehouse, as well as on inbound storage warehouse doors. We instrumented the bulk storage facility and the Intermediate maintenance facility. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, we instrumented the Navy Retrograde operations called Advanced Traceability and Control (ATAC). In this facility we move very high value retrograde freight and having asset visibility of this freight as it moves through our supply chain is very important. We also instrumented the Marine ATAC facility on Kaneohe Bay.

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5. What main challenges did the project team encounter, and how were they overcome?

Response: We faced a couple of key challenges. The first was our desire to implement a solution in advance of approval to place the technology on the NMCI network. The NMCI network requires significant vetting of any new computer system. While we intend to get all Navy AIT on the NMCI network in time, it would take 12-18 months to work through that process. So we were faced with the challenge of developing a separate commercial secured network to support this implementation.

The second challenge we faced was the development of data interfaces with DoD systems. We needed to get the pRFID data into the information systems used by the Sailors and Marines. This was the first time DOD had taken on this challenge and our effort involved a lot of coordination with DoD data systems program offices. There was a lot of work involved in this effort and we are pleased that we were able to gain this kind of data connectivity.

6. How did you address the change initiative locally? Was there resistance?

Response: Well, this is the Navy and so most people in the organization understand that we need to do our best to support Sailors and Marines and provide any improvements possible along the way. So most of the people involved in this project were interested in helping but we did need to provide some education about pRFID and how it would work. And, we needed to be able to conduct the implementation with minimal disruption to existing staff work—we are at war and our Sailors and Marines do not need their support network distracted. I'd say that what we did from a change management perspective was to provide knowledge and reassurance that this project would support the Navy's mission.

7. How did you plan to measure project success (e.g., schedule and budget), and were those parameters met?

Response: Measuring success has been crucial to this project from the beginning. There are many ways to view "success" but of course the most important is Return on Investment. We felt that we needed to demonstrate the positive impacts of the technology from a financial perspective. From the start, the project team had agreed to and been working toward some baseline metrics. Since the project is still fairly new we haven't concluded the full post implementation analysis but we believe we will be able to demonstrate positive financial impacts.

8. What's next for the Navy with respect to pRFID? How will the lessons from Oahu be leveraged to ensure overall program success?

Response: The Navy is moving forward with other pRFID implementations. We have an aggressive plan for deployments in FY08 and beyond. We absolutely will be leveraging lessons learned from Oahu – we have a core team of experts who are reviewing and analyzing what went right and what went wrong. We will be using that guidance as we continue to build our Navy pRFID network.

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