

Seven things to consider when purchasing an automatic RFID labeling system.

So you're ready to investigate automated RFID labeling. Where do you start?

1. **What are you going to put the RFID label on?** Sounds simple, but sometimes it's not so cut-and-dried. Do you want to apply an RFID label to a product, a carton, a tray, a poly-wrapped bundle? Most systems have the ability to handle different applications, including products/packages of varying size. Now is the time to think about the versatility that you require.
2. **Throughput requirements?** Automatic label applicators offer high-speed labeling to improve efficiency and overall throughput. It is very important to know what your requirements are now and what you expect they'll be in the future. A variety of factors contribute to overall throughput including conveyor speed, product size, space between products, number of products per minute, label size, data source and communication method.
3. **Is precise label placement required?** Automatic labeling systems offer very precise label placement which can be critical for some products. You do have to determine the possible need for a unit/stand with the ability to be moved if the placement of the label changes from product to product.
4. **Is variable data needed?** Auto encode-print-apply systems are ideal for incorporating RFID into an existing label and/or if you want to add variable information to the label.
5. **What about your future needs?** If your labeling needs might change down the road, you're going to want a system that can be upgraded or retrofitted to meet your needs. Consider what products you will be labeling initially as well as down the road. It is important to note that encode-print-and-apply systems can also be used to print-and-apply non-RFID labels.
6. **What type of post-sale services and warranties are available?** It's important to know exactly which ongoing benefits your RFID labeling equipment vendor can provide. Is installation and operator training included in the price? Does the vendor offer preventive maintenance and on-site service, or are you going to have to seek a third party? The availability of technical support also should be examined. Get details before you make any decision.
7. **Can the vendor also provide RFID smart labels?** Not only do you need an RFID label, you also need the right label material and adhesive combination for your application. There also are factors like matching the type of label with the label dispensing method of your labeling system and its environment to ensure proper operation.

You should get the answers to all of these questions before you finalize the purchase of an automatic RFID labeling system. Make certain that the vendors you consider become engaged in your RFID project and can provide the guidance you need.

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