

RFID JOURNAL

Postcards From the RFID Edge

How will RFID affect the world of travel in the year 2030?

By John Edwards

Dec. 1, 2009—All CEOs wish they had a crystal ball, so they could see the future and prepare for it rather than simply react to change. Unfortunately, there's no way to know what the world will be like in, say, 20 years. But we believe radio frequency identification will be widely adopted by 2030 and will have a profound impact not just on the way companies do business, but on the way people shop, travel, learn and more.

Exactly how this growth will take place isn't clear, but there are signs. Technology providers that promote the benefits of RFID and deliver solutions to solve specific business problems, providing a fast return on investment, will lead the way. At the same time, companies that use the technology—to track assets and inventory, streamline operations and business processes, or provide customer services—will create and leverage an RFID infrastructure to achieve even more benefits.



In the scenarios on the following pages, we imagine what the world will be like in 2030. Read them, then ask yourself where your company will be 20 years from today. Will you be powering or using the solutions that attract shoppers to retail stores, expedite product shipments, put the joy back in travel, enhance education, simplify chores and save lives? Or will you be playing catch-up?

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Dear Kelly,

At long last, Alex and I are in London! Are you surprised to receive an old-fashioned paper postcard? Such a retro way to communicate when you're traveling—and much more fun than text messaging to your coffee cup each morning.

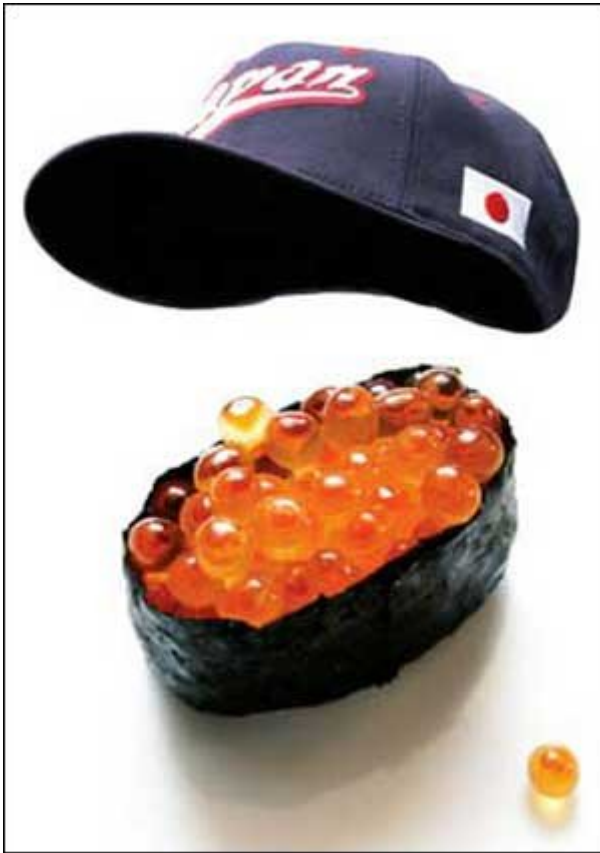
Our flight departed and arrived on time, thank goodness. And I can't believe how quickly we moved through immigration at Heathrow. Our passports were scanned as we stood on the moving walkway heading to the baggage claim, and we didn't even have to answer any questions at Customs about the purpose of our visit, where we were staying or the length of our trip, because all that information was loaded into our passport cards weeks before we left home.

Our rental car was waiting at the curb, and we were thrilled to discover that our universal car key works as well in England as it does back in California. Driving on the M1 into London used to send me into a panic attack ("stay to the left, stay to the left"), but once we glided onto the new network of automated motorways, with every car a safe 1.5 meters apart, I was able to sit back and relax as we zoomed safely along at 130 kilometers per hour (I sure hope they attach those motorway tags securely to the license plate!).

Be sure to check your coffee cup for more news. Cheers!

—Dale

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Hi Charlie,

Tokyo is everything Kim and I hoped it would be—a fantastic combination of the old and the new. Everything runs so efficiently. I'm told that tags are now embedded into just about everything that moves here (other than people). The national transport system ensures not only that all intercity trains arrive and depart on schedule, but that local bus and subway schedules are coordinated with each train's arrival. It all runs like clockwork.

On our second day here, I finally achieved my lifelong dream of attending a Japanese baseball game. The same phone I use to attend Mets games at Valentine Stadium in Queens allowed us through the gates at the grand New Tokyo Dome. It's great that all the world's baseball leagues have finally agreed on a Near-Field Communications ticketing system.

The billboards in Tokyo are amazing, capable of reading personal preferences from phones, bracelets, and car and hotel room keys. Even the small street leading to our inn is filled with billboards. Everyone around us could tell they were near Americans as soon as the signs began presenting advertising videos in English with products priced in dollars. I even saw a few signs displaying ads in Spanish, my second language preference

Gotta run now. Sushi awaits.

—Frank

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Dear Ashley,

Well, after months of planning and waiting, we've finally made it to San Francisco. I picked up a temporary travel bracelet that entitled me to a week of unlimited public transportation—even on the cable cars—for just \$150. I don't have to do a thing—the identification system automatically recognizes me as soon as I enter the station or vehicle. I know I could have used my phone to do the same thing, but I want to keep the bracelet as a souvenir.

The shopping in San Francisco is truly world class, but Bill is still making fun of my fickle attitude toward purchases. He says that smart price tags, with their ability to synchronize sales transactions seamlessly with my credit account, make it too easy for me to exchange things.

Having the ability to run in and out of stores to pick up and drop off stuff has spoiled me, he says, insisting we need to bring back sales clerks, cash registers and paper receipts—can you imagine that? Later.

—Jean

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Jess,

Two whole weeks with nothing to do but play and relax! I'm looking forward to biking around as many Hawaiian Islands as I

can. Believe it or not, I'll be able to use my San Francisco public transit bracelet to rent a bike here. All I'll have to do to unlock a bike from a public stand is wave my hand in front of a sign.

I spent my first day here refining my golf skills at my favorite course on Oahu. It seems that all the long hours behind my desk back home have left me kind of rusty. The golf balls were telling my phone that both my distance and accuracy were way off. I'd like to blame my poor performance on unfamiliar clubs (my set isn't compatible with the local ID technology), but as they say back in Omaha, "The ball never lies." Aloha.

— Russ

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Tommy,

Stu and I are really enjoying our first-ever visit to Greece, though we almost got off to a bad start. After deboarding the plane yesterday, we couldn't find our luggage and were afraid our suitcases had been left behind in Chicago. A quick check on our phones revealed that bags matching our smart ID tags were waiting for us right here in Athens, in an airline storage room at the next terminal. What a relief!

We're looking forward to touring Athens today. Our phone's InstaTravel app has already arranged a full schedule based on our preferences, including trips to the Acropolis, the National Archaeological Museum, restaurants for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and an evening concert. The entire schedule, including machine-readable transportation passes and tickets, has already been loaded onto our phones. Now all we have to do is make sure we don't lose our phones! Opa!

—Sammi

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Billie,

Imagine me in Egypt! I spent all day yesterday in Giza touring the pyramids. They now limit the number of people who can actually enter the Great Pyramid to only 50 per day to prevent damage caused by the humidity in human breath. Fortunately, we got our ID bracelets some six months ago, so after a quick "ping" at the pyramid's entrance, we walked right in.

BTW, the local cuisine is great. But after trying my best to speak the language, I'm now firmly convinced I'll never be able to order a meal off an Arabic menu. From now on, I'm sticking to places that let me scan their menu with my phone, see an on-screen translation, and then touch an icon to order the item. Salaam.

—Susie

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Hiya Buddy,

So on my first day in Argentina, I managed to get myself a speeding ticket. Well, I'm not familiar with the local traffic

regulations or the ways they're enforced. Seems the police have roadside gadgets that can read a tag embedded in each car's license plate. If you go from Point A to Point B too quickly, you get a ticket. It's a devilishly simple—and expensive—technology.

Turns out that at one point along the road, I was driving a whopping 6.8 kilometers per hour over the speed limit. The moment I got to the hotel, my phone beeped and I saw that my checking account was \$534 lighter (they even added a charge for the automatic currency conversion). Next time, I think I'll get on one of those automated roadways and let the car do the driving. Buenos dias.

—Jon

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Hello, Aura,

After a night's rest in Istanbul, we sailed down the Bosphorus to the Topkapi Palace Museum to see the wonders of the Ottoman Empire. The sheer size of the place was intimidating, but the exhibit guide is the best and most extensive I've seen at any museum anywhere. Every object in the Topkapi's collection tells its own story, in the language of your choice, on your own phone. The system is interactive, so you can ask a sword, for example, who owned it, what battles it fought in, how it was made and so on. I mean, you can spend an hour or more just talking to a single object.

Shopping in the Grand Bazaar was another once-in-a-lifetime experience. What an amazing selection of clothes! You should have seen all the hangers lighting up with items in my size and favorite colors. Quite a show! The haggling was also something else. The price tag on one of the purses I was examining was changing numbers so rapidly (going down, down, down), I was getting dizzy just looking at it. I finally waved my payment card at the tag just to get it to stop! Peace.

—Katie

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To read more RFID scenarios from the year 2030, click [here](#).

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