



CERP Bretagne Atlantique Uses RFID to Track its Plastic Crates

Leading French pharmaceutical distributor uses Frequentiel's RFID solution to avoid losing its crates

"A few years ago, we would lose between 6,000 and 7,000 crates each year, which would translate into €50,000 and €60,000 in lost revenue. For two years, we have lost almost none, which allows us to nearly reach the return on investment on this project."

— **Philippe Ballouard**, Director of the Supply Chain at CERP Bretagne Atlantique

Key facts

- Leading pharmaceutical distributor
- Works with over 2,000 pharmacies
- Two million order lines prepared per month

Like all actors in its sector, CERP Bretagne Atlantique must comply with regulatory sector requirements related to tracking of drug batches in effect since 2011.

The pharmaceutical distributor, who prepares and delivers twice a day to 2,000 pharmacies from nine logistics centers between Brest and Angoulême, had already started working towards these requirements for the previous few years.

"We decided to divide our project into two parts," says Philippe Ballouard, Supply Chain Director at CERP Bretagne Atlantique. "The first step was to track plastic crates independent from their contents. The second step was the tracking of contents, namely the registration for all our references, recipients, batches of medicines and expiry dates using Datamatrix 2D codes."

A Simple and Robust Solution

The first step is live and leverages RFID technology at the crate-level. Two million order lines per month are prepared using 80,000 plastic crates (for activities in Metropolitan France and the French island of La Réunion), which are delivered to pharmacies. Empty crates are recovered in a subsequent tour. CERP Bretagne Atlantique decided to equip trays with RFID tags principally to facilitate inventory procedures during returns. Using an RFID reader, it only takes a few seconds to individually identify the returned crates, piled one on top of each other.

"Our processes are relatively simple. We were looking for an economical, robust and durable solution because the crates are exposed to a lot of shock," says Ballouard.

Frequentiel was selected to integrate the project and Zebra provided the RFID terminals. The project required an investment of approximately €200,000, including the 150 Zebra terminals (supporting both barcode and RFID scanning) and RFID tags (at €0.20 or €0.25 per piece), which are plasticized and resistant to rain, sun, heat, and shock.

Challenges

- Adhere to industry regulations regarding the tracking of medical batches.
- Reduce the loss of plastic crates.

Frequentiel Solution

- OCTO+ item-level RFID software platform.
- Employee apps to streamline routine tasks.
- Expert software integration and RFID professional services.
- Device and fixed hardware management services.

Benefits

- Accurate real-time tracking.
- Intuitive time-saving solution.
- Almost zero plastic crates lost, with up to €50,000 - €60,000 saved annually.

A Simple Tracking Solution for Plastic Crates

The results of the project speak for themselves.

“A few years ago, we lost between €50,000 and €60,000 annually due to the disappearance of plastic crates — between 6,000 and 7,000 per year,” says Ballouard. “For two years, we have lost almost none, which allows us to nearly reach the return on investment on this project.”

This tracking system for crates is also set up in La Reunion, and will soon be available in the other French islands of Mayotte and Tahiti. The system should be standardized in the coming years to include CERP Bretagne Atlantique’s other international activities in pharmaceutical distribution: Ivory Coast, Senegal, Burkina Faso, etc..