



# Building for the Future

Derksen Portable Buildings partners with Metalcraft for custom NFC application

BACKGROUND

How does radio frequency identification (RFID) fit into the portable buildings industry? Derksen Portable Buildings discovered a way to bring new technology to an existing application.

Portable buildings have many uses including residential storage, commercial applications, workshops and even temporary living spaces. Tennessee-based Derksen Portable Buildings has been serving this industry for nearly 30 years.

A long-time partner with Iowa-based identification products manufacturer Metalcraft, Derksen Portable Buildings already understood the need for tracking their portable structures. They started using a metal tag with serial numbers that had to be entered manually, thereby increasing the possibility of transposing numbers. This evolved to using a metal tag with a Quick Response (QR) code on it which dramatically decreased the number of errors.

CHALLENGE

However, Philip Todd, IT Director with Derksen Portable Buildings, could see that RFID, specifically near field communication (NFC) was where the industry was going and where he wanted Derksen Portable Buildings to be. Fortunately, Metalcraft was more than up to the challenge.

At its core the application for these tags is inventory tracking, but there is so much more at stake. The serial number helps ensure the building gets to the correct location, according to Todd. "The delivery drivers scan the tag to release the number/building from the system," he said. "It allows them to know where the building is at all times."

This process makes it more difficult to get the wrong building on the wrong truck. This lightens up the inventory process and the movement of buildings, ensuring that inventory is more accurate.

SOLUTION

Todd and his team worked with the team at Metalcraft to develop a custom constructed NFC tag that would work on both their wood and metal structures. In addition, they needed an RFID tag that would withstand inclement weather for years outdoors. Lastly, they wanted to showcase their logo. To offset the increased cost of the NFC tag, they combined their plastic branding tag with their serialized inventory tag. Metalcraft more than delivered. "Metalcraft was willing to listen to our needs and come up with a solution," said Todd.

They developed several different constructions for Todd and his team to test before ultimately deciding on one custom construction and placed their initial orders. From there, Metalcraft managed the serial numbers and sent out the tags to different locations. "It was a very smooth process," said Todd.

RESULT

The results have been exactly what Todd and his team had hoped for - by combining the two tags into one and programming the NFC tag with serial numbers coded to a unique URL - they were able to inventory dealer lots quicker and reconcile their inventory on the fly.

But they don't plan on stopping there. According to Todd, future plans involve allowing customers to read the NFC tags with their own phone and open building specification information or even a price sheet. Eventually, Todd envisions linking the NFC tag to an ecommerce page to purchase the building, but they haven't turned that piece on yet. Todd understands that the technology can do incredible things. "NFC opens up a lot of possibilities."

**"Metalcraft was willing to listen to our needs and come up with a solution."**

**PHILIP TODD**

- IT Director at Derksen Portable Buildings