



SUMMARY

KIMBARK COIN LAUNDRY

Customer

Kimbark Laundry & Dry Cleaning
Chicago, IL



Partner

RFID4U
Concord, CA

Industry

Soft Goods

Challenge

Provide an auditable chain of custody for soft goods while streamlining processes and increasing employee safety

Solution

- Zebra® RFD8500 RFID Reader
- RFID4U TagMatiks Software
- RFID4U TagMatiks RFID Tags

Results

- Increased weekly throughput by nearly 2x
- Reduced reimbursement costs for lost goods
- Boosted employee and customer safety with touchless service
- Increased revenues from high-value commercial customers

Kimbark Laundry & Dry-Cleaning Employs Touchless Processes Using Modern RFID-Based Workflows

Chicago-based laundry company leverages Zebra RFID technology to boost safety for customers and employees, while adding efficiencies and accountability to service

Since 2007, Kimbark Laundry & Dry Cleaning has done exactly what its name suggests—dry cleaning and laundering uniforms and clothing for commercial businesses, hair salons, a variety of local medical practitioners, hospitals, and government agencies. For nine of its first ten years, the company worked in much the same way that any local dry cleaner might, just at a larger scale.

The company's owner, Darryl Crawford, has a history of driving innovation inside and outside of the industry, including almost 20 years working as an IT consultant on massive networking projects. Crawford wanted to use his expertise to drive the company's next phase of modernization.

Having already improved Kimbark Laundry's networks, point-of-sale terminals, and lockers for easy pickup and drop off, Crawford started thinking about methods to improve inventory tracking and making workflows more efficient. These ideas would ultimately prove to be more important than originally envisioned.

“We wash garments at 170°F to help ensure garments are truly clean and safe, requiring an RFID solution that was waterproof and withstood high temperatures. We also needed a scanner that could quickly and accurately scan garments through several layers of fabric. Solutions from Zebra and RFID4U exceeded these expectations.”

**Darryl Crawford, Owner,
Kimbark Laundry & Dry Cleaning**



Enhancing Tracking and Workflows

When a few healthcare customers started losing scrubs, garment tracking became a big opportunity for improvement. Although the company wasn't at fault, Kimbark Laundry needed a way to show the number of garments leaving the customer site was the same as the number returned to the customer site. Manual counts were not viewed as reliable by customers and often added up to 45 minutes to garment processing workflows.

“We needed to create a fast, auditable chain of custody, showing garments weren't going missing from our workflow,” Crawford says. “Otherwise, we'd be forced to reimburse customers for lost items, representing an ongoing cost for a problem that we have no control over.”

Medical practitioner uniforms such as soiled scrubs from coroners and mortuaries, representing a potential health hazard, also pushed the company to investigate touchless workflows. This would minimize the amount of contact with potentially contaminated garments while automating the counting process.

To address these challenges, Kimbark Laundry wanted to embed customer uniforms, scrubs, and patient gowns with RFID tracking tags. To kick off its project, Kimbark Laundry reached out to RFID4U, a Zebra partner, to find a complete RFID solution that worked for its unique needs.

Tracking Soft Goods in Seconds

Criteria put forward to RFID4U led Kimbark Laundry to leverage Zebra's RFD8500 RFID solution with RFID4U's TagMatiks tagging platform. The integrated platform enables users to instantly scan, count, and track assets from a distance as garments get picked up, cleaned and returned. The combined solution from Zebra and RFID4U was easy to deploy, learn, and use, cutting through possible roadblocks for adoption.

Choosing to embed soft goods with tracking tags created several process improvements for Kimbark Laundry. “Instead of spending nearly an hour counting a bag of laundry by hand, workers can simply scan it and get an accurate count in just a few seconds,” Crawford says. Most importantly, workers don't have to touch potentially contaminated clothing.

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SUCCESS STORY

KIMBARK LAUNDRY & DRY CLEANING

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As clothes are received, cleaned, and returned, the Zebra RFID scanner feeds reporting software from RFID4U, so managers have a clear view into where garments are at every step. Additionally, the cleaners can report back to customers if there are any discrepancies between what was picked up and cleaned versus what customers claimed. This updated process helps Kimbark Laundry avoid the added cost of reimbursements for lost garments and provides customers clear insight into where garments were actually lost on their end.

Scaling Rapidly in the Face of COVID-19

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, Kimbark Laundry had recently completed its RFID transformation. In addition to efficiencies gained and cost savings achieved, the benefit of having employees minimize contact with garments became even more apparent. Healthcare organizations are placing a greater premium on laundry vendors that can safely clean potentially infected garments, as well as help ensure the health and safety of their front-line workers.

Kimbark Laundry was well positioned to address its customers' concerns. At the same time, the company demonstrated the ability to accept increased demand without disruption.

The laundry began servicing more work—nearly double. Added efficiencies and improved safety protocols helped Kimbark attract new customers, including government agencies partnering with hospitals during the pandemic, giving revenues an additional lift.

The RFID tracking process also offered an unexpected value add for healthcare customers. TagMatiks software provided insight on how many times an individual garment had been washed, helping hospitals understand how often to replace garments, uniforms and bed linens in accordance with safety guidelines.

“We’re starting to develop solutions using RFID technologies that can deliver real-time information and create impactful visibility for healthcare workers.”

**Darryl Crawford, Owner,
Kimbark Laundry &
Dry Cleaning**



SUCCESS STORY

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Continuing to Innovate

Kimbark Laundry is working with its customers to develop even more sophisticated asset-tracking solutions that leverage RFID technology to help them mitigate inventory shrinkage. For example, by placing an RFID scanner in a uniform closet and then tagging uniforms, a business can understand how often each uniform is being worn and then help ensure each uniform makes it into the hamper.

“It’s important for hospitals to know where all of their assets are—including what size scrubs are available on which floor and in which closets,” Crawford says. “We’re starting to develop solutions using RFID technologies that can deliver real-time information and create impactful visibility for healthcare workers.”

While the actual method of cleaning soft goods hasn’t changed, modernizing the process with RFID technology from Zebra and RFID4U has dramatically changed the experience, creating benefits for both customers and workers alike.



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