rf IDEAS

Five Factors for More Productive and Secure Attendance Tracking

eBook

Creating the optimal contact tracing integration

Attendance Tracking: A More Holistic Approach.

On January 29, 2021, the U.S. Department of Labor announced that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) had issued its strongest, most stringent safety guidelines to date for preventing the spread of coronavirus in workplaces and campuses across the country.

According to Senior Counselor to the Secretary of Labor, M. Patricia Smith, "The recommendations in OSHA's updated guidance will help us defeat the virus, strengthen our economy and bring an end to the staggering human and economic toll that the coronavirus has taken on our nation."[1] Near the top of the new recommendations by OSHA is the directive to "Identify control measures to limit the spread of the virus."[2]

What does this mean for Independent Software Vendors (ISVs) and the thousands of customers who count on them for support every day?

Simply put, technology plays a key role. And attendance tracking and contact tracing applications are going to be a focal point for enterprise, education, government, healthcare, manufacturing and other sectors for the foreseeable future.

ISVs must quickly adapt to new customer needs.

This close connection between technology and a safe working environment requires ISVs to develop both their product and their roster of partners to serve the emerging needs of customers who are currently exploring attendance tracking applications

According to Marlon Bermas, founder of TNETIC Inc., maker of i-Attend software, "We must be more proactive, rather than reactive, about safety."

For ISVs, becoming more proactive in this area begins with key imperatives in the design, development and implementation of holistic attendance tracking solutions that enable customers to initiate robust safety practices. This eBook looks at five basic factors that ISVs may consider in any integration.

From selecting the right technology solution among a wide array of offerings to ensuring that safety is always paramount, these key drivers will help ISVs empower their customers to realize greater trust, transparency and trackability during unprecedented times.

> **"We must be more proactive, rather than reactive, about safety."**
>
> Marlon Bermas, TNETIC

Factor 1: Solution Efficiency.

With new OSHA guidance to follow and more workplaces, schools and healthcare facilities bringing back employees and students, ISVs and customers alike are now faced with technology options for more robust attendance tracking. In fact, part of the ISV's main challenge is deciding which technology to invest time, resources and effort in supporting.

Simply conducting physical screenings where employees or visitors must answer a variety of health-related questions before they are admitted on premise ("Are you symptomatic?" Have you been around anyone with symptoms?") typically requires too much time and personnel, especially in environments where there are literally thousands of people passing through on a daily basis.

So, customers are turning to a variety of tech offerings that promise efficiency, security and speed in both implementation and adoption. These include:

QR Codes. Labels or stickers placed on seats or in common areas that require users to scan to confirm their presence. This technology not only requires a vast quantity of stickers placed virtually everywhere, but forces users to employ a mobile authentication app to facilitate operation.

Mobile Apps. Both Apple's App Store and Google Play feature a myriad of homegrown attendance tracking apps—some at very low-price points—that may appeal to cost-conscious customers. Even some major consulting companies have jumped into this arena and are quickly rolling out proprietary apps.

Regardless of where the app was developed, the main pain point for this approach is felt by users who must be thoroughly trained in how to use often complicated apps. For people who aren't tech-savvy, this could cause frustration and fatigue.

Beacons. This **BLE®**-enabled approach uses strategically placed hardware to account for everyone on premise. This technology has been previously used in commercial applications such as trade shows or large events. A substantial investment in hardware and installation may not align with many customer timelines or budgets.

These, of course, are just a few of the technologies out there. It's easy to see why misinformation can lead to disparate systems being acquired and implemented in the same environment. This can result in high support costs and complicated training regiments as well as gaps in screening and security.

A more holistic, flexible alternative.

An attendance tracking technology deployment should not only identify potential risks and help to safeguard employees, students, visitors or vendors, it should operate seamlessly throughout any environment's ecosystem.

Single- or dual-frequency RFID readers give ISVs the ideal tool for attendance tracking applications. Quality readers provide the ability work with virtually any credential (i.e. existing employee badge) which helps to maximize the value of existing authentication systems. They are available in various form factors to meet a variety of applications. And they offer durability and intuitive operation for even non-technical users.

In fact, just a wave or tap is all it takes for users to verify their health status when entering a facility. As legal and HR departments will attest, this method of attendance tracking puts the liability on the individual, rather than on the enterprise, in the unfortunate event of an outbreak.

This means that if an employee taps in, but then tests positive, the responsibility is on him or her rather than on the organization to pay the consequences for any new cases. Liability, compliance and risk are important considerations in any workplace.

In addition, these readers are simple and cost-effective to install, quick to scale and offer all the possibilities of mobility, too.

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The Four "T"s of Mitigation

The approach taken by governments and enterprises alike to mitigate the spread of coronavirus—or any viral outbreak—consists of four key elements, known collectively as the Four Ts.

Timing. Swift, decisive action must be immediately taken to minimize spread

Tactics. Protocols for the immediate removal of infected individuals, quarantining and efficient issuance of guidelines

Testing. While vaccinations are becoming more accessible, testing procedures remain an important component of mitigation protocols

Tracing. The ability to quickly and comprehensively track down potential exposures through a verifiable list of know contacts

Factor 2: Convenience.

IT executives at corporations, hospitals, universities and manufacturing facilities may understand the critical need for attendance tracking solutions, but when they start thinking through the time, costs, and logistics of implementation and management of such solutions, stress levels rise.

Time is of the essence to get these solutions installed, staff trained and data managed, yet many of the aforementioned tools require a serious commitment in both implementation time and employee education.

average daily smartphone screen time:
4 hours 20 minutes[3]

A quicker path to safety protocols.

One of the first questions ISVs need to ask customers is, "What existing user authentication solutions do you employ?" That's because existing RFID readers and/or employee badges can provide the infrastructure for seamless attendance tracking and forensic reporting, all from a single platform.

Identity Access Management (IAM) via existing single- and dual-frequency readers delivers a streamlined path to attendance tracking applications delivered by ISVs. With readers already in place, there's no physical installation necessary and even when new readers must be installed, RFID technology offers speed, flexibility and cost savings (see sidebar in next section).

While the Four Ts apply to overall mitigation efforts, ISVs considering hardware options should also keep in mind the "Four Cs:" Credential, Compatibility, Connectivity and Contactless.

These four basic requirements help to ensure smooth implementation and ongoing system flexibility.

Credential. Credentials can be in the form of a badge, card or fob, but today the fastest growing credential is an individually owned mobile device. According to Gartner, one in five businesses has adapted a mobile credential.[4] And 54% of businesses will upgrade to a mobile access control system by 2022.[5]

Virtually everyone has a smartphone and mobile credentials are not only more secure than traditional passwords, they offer the opportunity for automatic updates to easily meet changing workplace or campus health and safety protocols.

For healthcare, finance, government and other sectors that rely on the highest level of security, biometric credentials are vital. Fingerprint readers deliver simplicity and convenience while providing the "something you are" component in multi-factor authentication protocols.

Compatibility. Selecting the right reader technologies will ensure simple, stress-free compatibility with a wide range of devices. Beyond smartphones, nano-sized readers can fit desktop keyboards or tablet devices making them ideal for both stationary and mobile applications at the office, jobsite, school building or home.

Connectivity. Accurate data collection requires the ability for offline time and attendance recording.

Contactless. Integrated proximity cards and **Bluetooth®** technology in mobile readers help customers maintain a "less-touch" environment while delivering essential attendance tracking data.

Factor 3: Investment + Risk Management.

IT professionals may be surprised at the investment required to implement an attendance tracking solution. In fact, a McKinsey whitepaper recently cited a $3.6 billion proposal to help the U.S. government create its contact-tracing program.[6] Unfortunately, the costs of avoiding workplace mitigation protocols can be even more painful.

Consider that one infected employee would require a two- to six-week or more recovery period. Multiply this by a dozen or a hundred employees in a workplace outbreak and it's easy to see the enormous economic impact brought about by this pandemic.

Companies could lose millions in productivity simply by allowing a single infected individual to enter the workplace. Even worse, if the workplace happens to be a hospital or similar healthcare facility, the ripple effect would be devastating.

A brighter scenario.

ISVs can ease the minds of many customers. With the right partner, it's possible to make attendance tracking applications more affordable. In fact, companies can actually create more ROI through authentication applications in other areas.

For example, the same high-performance readers that are used for seamless attendance tracking can also deliver the following benefits:

- More control over time tracking for revenue reporting
- Insights into a historical trail of interactions through data intelligence and analytics
- Improved accuracy and accountability for audits or scheduling
- Simplified event and guest management
- Optimized employee safety in drills and other mustering-type activities

Companies and schools that invest in attendance tracking solutions today will also have the peace of mind that in the years ahead, when coronavirus is no longer the dire threat it is in 2021, they will be more prepared to minimize employee risk and financial impact.

Maximum need, minimal challenges.

At the peak of the current pandemic, World Wide Technology (WWT), a value-added reseller partnered with rf IDEAS® to implement an attendance tracking solution for a major healthcare provider.

The customer required an operational solution as quickly as possible to be installed at more than 800 sites. What's more, the technology would be accessed more than 370,000 times every week by thousands of employees.

Using simple, kiosk-mounted tablets and WAVE ID® readers featuring Bluetooth technology, the team delivered a safe, no-touch application in a matter of weeks, not months. The time savings was achieved in both the set-up and training stages.

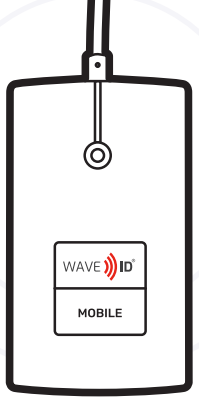
Simple set-up. First, set-up was substantially simplified since each location required only a kiosk-mounted tablet and WAVE ID mobile authentication. Seven to eight kiosks could be deployed by a single technician every day, so it took just 15 business days to install the technology across 800 sites.

Five-minute training sessions. Despite the vast number of users, training was minimal. Because everyone understands how to tap a credential, no specialized training was required for the 250,000 users—a significant savings in time and productivity.

> "Every user knows how to scan a badge. They do it every day, 40 times a day, every time they enter a door. So when you think you think about the training requirements, this healthcare company trained a quarter of a million people in two weeks because it was less than a five-minute training."

Matthew Stein, WWT solutions engineer

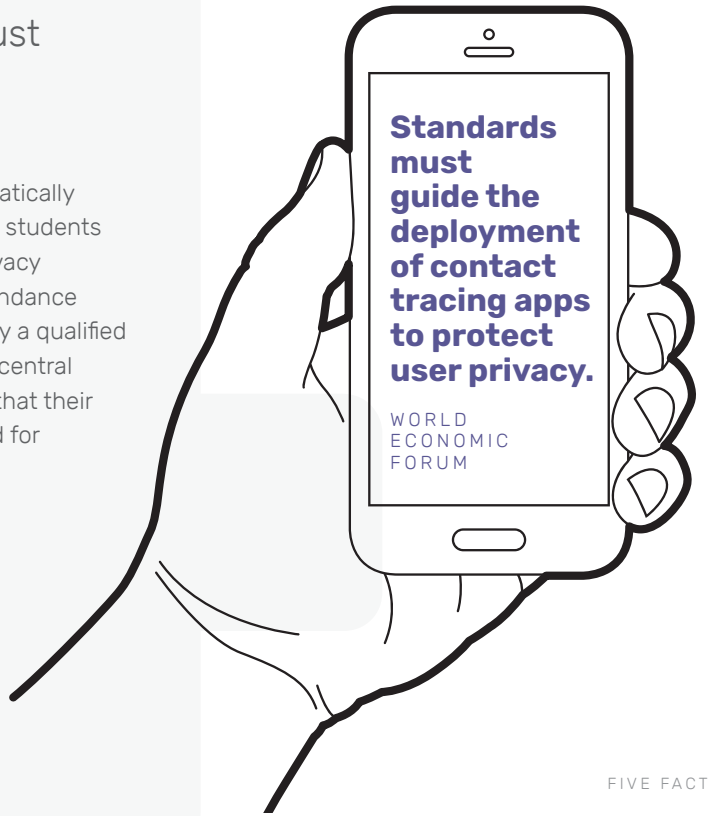
Factor 4: Data Security + Transparency.



In a recent study, U.S. employees indicated that company transparency was the number-one factor in determining their workplace happiness.[7] So it's critical that organizations focus on transparency to foster trust and build morale during stressful times.

Because employees are tracked automatically as they enter and leave a workplace (or students on a school campus), there may be privacy and ethical concerns. Fortunately, attendance tracking solutions that are monitored by a qualified administrator and send data to secure central repository can help assure employees that their personal information is only being used for safety and mitigation purposes.

As attendance tracking procedures become more common across industry and education, open protocol advocacy groups are already developing frameworks that ensure personal privacy despite the pandemic-driven demands for data. The World Economic Forum notes, "Standards must guide the deployment of contact tracing apps to protect user privacy."



Gathering only what's necessary.

While cell tower and GPS location tracking pose greater privacy risks to users than Bluetooth proximity tracking methods, organizations can provide a security and safety with minimal information gleaned via reader technologies.[8]

For example, reading name and credential numbers only and keeping this information on a secure access management database visible only to the organization's administrator goes a long way to preserving individual privacy while providing enough data to quickly identify potential contacts to a symptomatic individual.

Best-in-class readers offer seamless, actionable accountability and an understanding of real-time employee status while helping to reduce manual processes, potential data breaches and simple administrator errors.

More importantly, reader-based attendance tracking offers flexibility in information gathering so the organization can stay compliant with current and emerging privacy standards.

Factor 5: Empowering Safety.

Every organization—whether it's a large corporation, a suburban school district or a major healthcare provider with hundreds of locations—will have its own approach to safety. The specific protocols established, the level of data gathered and the expectations for an attendance tracking tool's performance will vary by application.

For the ISV, the most critical aspect of any technology implementation is partnering with the right hardware provider to facilitate a solid foundation that delivers safety at whatever level the customer expects.

This could mean a full biometric system that reads every individual's temperature or, more commonly, it could be a straightforward, survey-based protocol that allows employees to tap in with the acknowledgement that they are not currently experiencing symptoms nor have they been around anyone who's sick.

Creating a safe workplace and instilling confidence in the workforce or student body requires a mutual commitment from both ISV and hardware provider in a few key areas:

Speed. How quickly can the implementation be handled? During a pandemic, each day counts. According to the team at software provider TNETIC, a typical elementary school installation of its i-Attend software and rf IDEAS readers takes less than a week.

Training is another concern. How quickly can employees or students get up to speed on using the technology?

In the case of WWT and its recent application at 800 sites of a major healthcare provider, the customer's employees needed only a five-minute debrief to understand the information they were given, the use of the credential and what the value was to the organization.

Support. Both ISV and hardware provider must have a mutual understanding of what kind of support they will offer the customer both pre- and post-implementation. Design ideas and consultation should come from both sides and be delivered in a timely manner to the customer's IT team. Once installed, both partners must be equally committed to exceptional support.

Obviously, companies with a long track record of service excellence and on-staff technical experts who can handle any challenges are a safer bet than an unproven start-up.

Safety. Even as attendance tracking solutions are deployed to save lives and mitigate the spread of outbreaks, it's more important than ever that the solution itself is safe to use.

This is precisely why Bluetooth-enabled readers have been embraced by organizations seeking contactless authentication. No-touch applications reduce viral spread and boost employee confidence that their organization is doing everything it can to ensure a safe working environment.

Turn to the Authority in Secure Authentication + Identification Solutions.

rf IDEAS has been an industry leader in proximity-based authentication and identification solutions for more than 25 years. Today, our innovative portfolio of credential readers is compatible with nearly every proximity and contactless smart card on the market, as well as expanding compatibility with leading mobile credentials.

As an ISO 9001:2015 Certified company, rf IDEAS maintains a quality system that ensures processes, products and overall management always exceeds expectations.

We continue to partner with some of the most respected ISVs to foster safety and confidence in workplaces and campuses alike. Our expert technical teams and proactive service professionals have earned a reputation for going above and beyond to help our partners innovate, deploy and deliver world-class implementations.

At the heart of each successful engagement is our full array of TAP+KNOW™ reader solutions for trust, transparency and trackability.

Trust begins here.™

rf IDEAS

We're Here for You.

If you have any questions on the information found in this eBook or require more information about rf IDEAS or attendance tracking applications using our portfolio of reader technologies, we are here to talk. Please contact one of the representatives below or email sales@rfIDEAS.com to talk to an expert.

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