2016 predictions for the AIDC industry

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SMBs and large enterprises alike are making a big shift toward legacy system modernisation. A key component of these modernisation initiatives is labelling.

Things such as government and industry regulation, customer responsiveness, operational efficiency, varying production volumes, supply chain collaboration and brand protection are forcing companies to take a hard look at the systems and processes that support their labelling in an effort to identify opportunities to increase agility and reduce costs. Two of the biggest trends we see in these labelling system modernisation efforts are standardisation and centralisation.

Many companies have disparate systems that have been acquired through mergers or exist as part of legacy software implementations. Having labelling processes touch multiple systems introduces a host of problems like label errors, non-compliance, production downtime and product recalls. What's more, maintaining multiple systems is very taxing on corporate IT resources. More and more companies are standardising on a single platform for labelling that integrates with core business systems to streamline the entire process.

Many times with legacy labelling software, companies find that label data resides in a variety of locations, making it difficult to search and index labels, facilitate label changes and approvals, capture and report on label printing history, analyse printer and device usage and manage changes. Many companies host labelling at multiple sites and locations, adding another layer of complexity. Companies are shifting to a centralised labelling system to address these challenges.

Regulatory requirements are becoming more stringent than ever. Companies in heavily regulated industries such as medical device, pharmaceutical, and food and beverage are under constant pressure to comply or else face hefty penalties and lost business. Many legacy compliance methods involve human intervention and consist of paper-based record keeping, maintaining multiple copies of records, and manual validation of records by multiple employees.

These methods can result in costly and potentially life threatening errors and oversights. The FDA has set regulations that focus on electronic methods to ensure proper data retention and validation in order to reduce

errors which can impact safety and security. Labelling must be centralised, controlled and audited so that compliance requirements can be adhered to and validated.

Companies should look for scalable multi-user design, print and management solutions that provide full label lifecycle management and allow them to adopt best practices to improve print productivity and reduce cost. Companies in regulated industries can achieve compliance using label lifecycle management solutions that allow business users to design, review, approve and control label data. Data validation, time stamps, maintenance of records, and electronic signature capture enable compliance with FDA 21 CFR Part 11 requirements, EU GMP practice guidelines and other industry and government regulations.

The consolidation on the hardware side of the industry is enabling some of the standardisation and rationalisation that companies are looking for. Now instead of supporting multiple hardware solutions they are able to focus time and resources on a single vendor. The consolidation will also help accelerate the adoption of label management solutions (LMS) and in-fact extend it to mobile devices including handheld computers, tablets and mobile printers. Next-generation mobile printing will go beyond simple template printing to deliver intelligent labels and receipts with much more dynamic content that makes better use of label real-estate.

We believe that a majority of companies are not aware of their need for or are still trying to understand how to facilitate legacy labelling system modernisation. The early adopters are already reaping the benefits of label management solutions and the technology adoption life cycle has now shifted to the early majority. We now see an increasing number of companies looking for ways to standardise and centralise their labelling to mitigate risk, optimise process and increase agility. As they engage in legacy label system modernisation, they will benefit from LMS and create an operational and supply chain advantage that will help grow their business.