



Provia Breaks Out of the SCE Pack With RFID

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With all of the hoopla over Seabiscuit, the legendary 1930s racehorse, perhaps we can be forgiven for comparing RFID and horse racing, and **Provia Software** to the legendary underdog.

On Monday, Provia will announce that it has the “first supply chain execution application with full RFID support” for warehouses. What the press release won’t say is that Gillette is already using RFID technology with Provia’s *ViaWare* WMS software to track cases and pallets of shaving products. This was part of the presentation given by a Gillette executive at our Retail and Consumer Goods Executive Conference last April.

Provia: A quiet vendor with big ideas

Provia is one of the quietest software vendors in the supply chain market, despite having been in business for 15 years and completed more than 550 installations at some 160 customers. The base appears to be evenly divided between 3PLs and customers drawn from three core verticals: Consumer Packaged Goods, High-Tech/Electronics, and Wholesale and Industrial Distribution, with a handful of Retail customers, too. The big appeal of *ViaWare* is the end-to-end serial number identification and tracking and the advanced kitting functionality.

Partnering with other vendors and customers for success

We attended the company’s user conference last month. One thing that struck us was how well Provia worked with partners, especially **Pinnacle Distribution** and its transportation management software, **TECSYS** for distribution in Latin America, and **Taylor Manufacturing Systems**. Provia is developing a new application with Taylor for a well-known consumer goods company in the distribution of entertainment products.

The two companies are teaming to match constraint-based scheduling and capacity planning with warehousing transaction management to optimize labor costs (including temporary and overtime labor), equipment capacity, transportation costs, inventory availability, and required delivery dates. The end result is a daily schedule that includes order release times. The *ViaWare* WMS software manages the actual schedule execution and provides feedback of actual versus scheduled performance, including unplanned events (such as inventory shortages or equipment problems). The capacity planning module is designed to allow planners to develop a labor and transportation plan to deliver orders on time at the lowest possible cost.

Breaking out of the pack

Provia expects to finish this year with \$28M in revenue. While this places it firmly in the middle of the WMS pack in terms of size, it’s impressive that the company will do this with only 115 employees. In addition to the RFID and Taylor projects, pay attention to *ViaView*, a new product combining visibility, event management, and decision support. A new executive dashboard feature allows companies to have near real-time status information on on-time performance, inventory levels, turns, and other performance metrics. One office products customer is using it to get visibility into its dealer network so that it can match dealer inventory to customer orders.

The course that Provia is on is a lot longer than anything Seabiscuit faced. And there are other bigger and stronger horses on the same track. This is a pretty conservatively run company that just might sneak up on some of the other thoroughbreds.

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