



## Is RFID the answer for you right now?

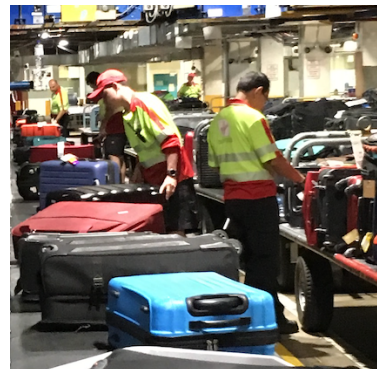
In 2019 IATA resolved to support the global deployment of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) for bag tracking. This initiative, along with Resolution 753 on Bag Tracking is aimed at addressing the millions of dollars spent by Airlines each year in the repatriation and compensation to passengers for mishandled bags.



This attention and the leadership shown by IATA is critical to delivering an improved service to passengers. No-one wants to find that their personal belongings have gone missing mid journey. The question to be addressed is whether RFID is the best solution for your business right now!

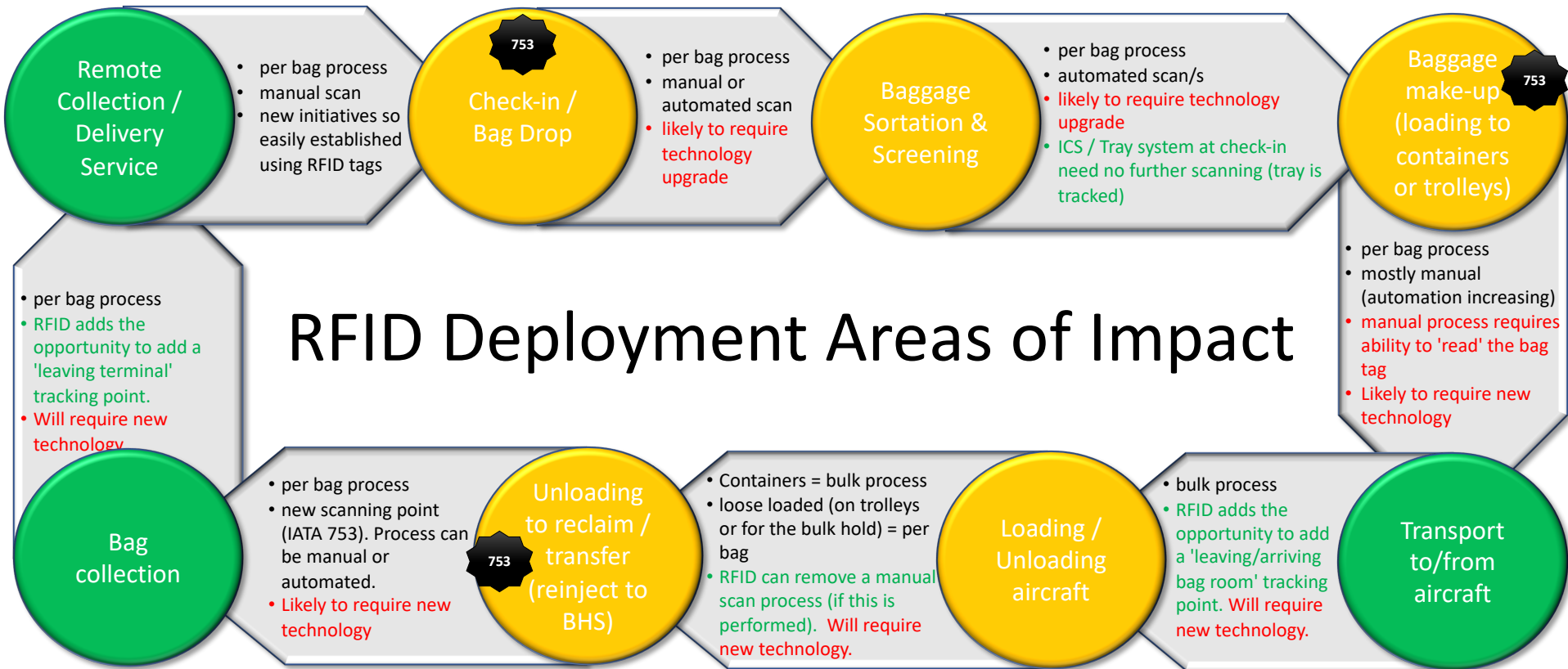


Coming to the end of 2021, the Aviation industry is only just starting to get back on it's feet. Some regions of the world are further along the journey than others. With more than 18 months of significantly suppressed travel, most stakeholders are staring at an empty money box and are not keen to commit to expensive projects that won't deliver clear revenue or cost reductions quickly.



One of the significant benefits of RFID tags over traditional bar code tags is the ability to read in bulk. Additionally, RFID technology eliminates the *need* for line of sight scanning, however it is the people in the process who still need to see the details about the bag.

Let's look at the steps involved in the baggage service in more detail (diagram on page 2).



**Key:**

- Opportunity to improve tracking / Customer service
- Expected to require spend / new technology
- IATA Resolution 753 mandatory tracking points



As can be seen in the diagram (on page 2), there are areas that RFID provides an opportunity to improve the customer experience and track the bags with even greater detail than the points required by IATA Resolution 753.

One of the first questions you need to answer is; *will you still use bag tags that show the critical flight and identity information?* Without this, the scale of change is even greater, particularly when looking at the Ground Handling activities.

The downside is the number of process points that will require technology upgrade *and* the question of which stakeholders 'own' that equipment. For example, as an airport operator you are unlikely to have the responsibility for the:

- Ground Handling Agents (GHAs);
- tracking scanners used for Baggage Reconciliation (BRS)
- Ground Support Equipment (GSE) used for loading and unloading the aircraft.

So, if you move to RFID tags your business case needs to include the risk that traditional barcode bag tags are still required to support the GHA (and maybe Security) process steps.

Then there are the bags that fall outside of the 'usual' box. These could be bags arriving from, or going to, an airport that has not moved to RFID technology, particularly if the bag is transiting and needs to be

processed through your Baggage Sortation System (BHS). There are also the Out-of-Gauge or Oversized items that have to be manually handled due to their size, shape or weight. Finally, you have the random bags that for one reason or another are not where they are supposed to be. Maybe they are sat at the side of the road, possibly having fallen off a tug or trolley. Maybe they are out on the ramp, possibly put there for a logical reason but then forgotten in the rush of departing an aircraft or getting to the next arrival. Yes, all operators could carry a scanner to scan and identify the bag/item, however one of the benefits of RFID is the opportunity to reduce the need for deploying 100's of manually held scanners and the associated costs and manual handling issues that these have created.

In summary, RFID is a great technology that could easily be used to aid the tracking of bags, however given the financial challenges we face at this time, each business case needs to be looked at holistically, considering the cost for all stakeholders, and based on the benefit that will be achieved and at what cost. It can be expected that in environments where one stakeholder has the responsibility and ownership of the majority of the process and associated equipment, then the business case is expected to be supportive.

*An example case study to consider is that of Delta Airlines' deployment across their network in 2016. This was a test case that was key in supporting the IATA recommendation.*

*(<https://news.delta.com/delta-introduces-innovative-baggage-tracking-process>).*

If you are interested in exploring ways in which the use of RFID could enhance your aviation business, please feel free to make contact with me, Christine Druce, at ID&Resolve.

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Christine Druce is the founder and General Manager of ID&Resolve. Christine has over 20 years working in the aviation industry having delivered operational change projects in Airline, Airport and Ground Handling environments. She is also an active member of the Royal Aeronautical Society (RAeS), Air Transport Specialist Group

(ATSG) and was a key leader in the development of the Airport Operations Management Concept within the Single European Sky Air Traffic Research (SESAR) Program.

Through her company ID&Resolve, Christine works with organisations to identify, define and ultimately resolve the operational challenges identified. Having been involved in working for the three main stakeholders in the delivery of Air Transport Services, Christine can bring unique insight to the interconnectedness that is central to the success of the Aviation industry as a whole.

In recent years Christine has been focussing on Baggage Handling Systems and technology, including their associated processes and interfaces. Maintaining her focus on operational performance and safety, Christine drives engagement across the involved stakeholders, helping all parties to understand and appreciate the opportunities, risks and challenges in the end-to-end process and system life-cycle.

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