

### System to trace staff, equipment on trial

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A tracking system that can locate staff in an office or trace medical equipment in a hospital is on trial in Hong Kong.

The Productivity Council, which is running a pilot scheme at its Kowloon Tong office, said the system uses location-finding software and radio-frequency identification tags to find the exact position of an object on a Web browser in real time.

Stephen Lee, a director with the council, said the Real Time Location System (RTLS) traced individual staff members in the 250,000 sq ft office, clearly showing if they were working in proper locations at the right time.

"It allows us to locate the workers within seconds, which normally takes a few phone calls or a security guard to have a look," he said.

Unlike the Global Positioning System, the new technology can only be used in a pre-confined area like a room, building or a park, but it is much cheaper and does not generate electromagnetic waves.

June Lim - business development manager of SenseIQ, the US-based firm that launched the RTLS - said it was useful in hospitals, factories, theme parks and jewellery shops.

"It can work perfectly in hospitals to trace expensive medical equipment or patients without interfering with any equipment," he said. "In theme parks, it can provide peace of mind for parents who want to know where their children are."

Mr Lim said RTLS has been applied in different industries in the United States for a couple of years and the feedback was good.

It costs from US\$50,000 to US\$2 million, but the price for the introductory-level applications in Hong Kong may be cheaper.

The Productivity Council said it planned to promote the RTLS with the Hospital Authority, which intended to introduce similar location systems to monitor the use of medical equipment.

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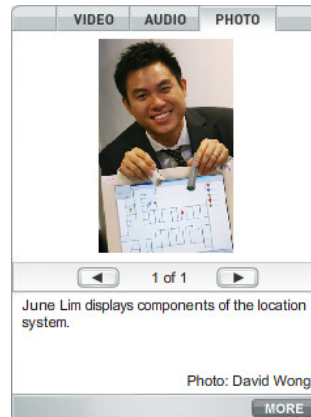


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June Lim displays components of the location system.

Photo: David Wong

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