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WHERENET INTRODUCES FULLY AUTOMATED WIRELESS PARTS-REPLENISHMENT SOLUTION FOR AUTOMOTIVE ASSEMBLY LINES

WhereNet Partners with Visible Inventory; Adds Sensor Capability to Award-Winning Wireless Kanban System to Enable Automotive OEMs to Continuously and Automatically Monitor and Replenish Parts on the Assembly Line

SANTA CLARA, Calif.—Feb. 11, 2004—WhereNet Corp., the leader of wireless solutions for tracking and managing enterprise assets, announced today the WhereNet® WhereSoft™ parts replenishment system and sensor-equipped WhereTag that enables fully automated wireless parts replenishment for automotive manufacturers. WhereNet also announced an OEM partnership with Visible Inventory, Inc., an industry-leading provider of real-time inventory management solutions. Its partnership with Visible Inventory expands the WhereNet suite of automotive applications to include more than 20 different product variations that can automatically sense when additional inventory is required and send an immediate request to deliver more parts to the assembly line. Supported by the standards-based WhereNet real-time locating system (RTLS) and wireless local area network (LAN), the automated WhereSoft parts replenishment system requires no human intervention to call for parts — resulting in higher labor productivity, significant inventory reduction, and optimized lean manufacturing processes.

"Dating back to the days of Henry Ford, the automotive assembly line has forever been a model of efficiency and a proving ground for breakthrough applications for improving productivity and profitability," said Ian McPherson, principal analyst for Wireless Data Research. "WhereNet's wireless, sensor-enabled, location-based systems are part of the last frontier for auto manufacturers as they 'lean out' their assembly lines, automate manual tasks, and potentially save millions of dollars in the process."

100 Percent Automated Parts Replenishment with Zero Human Intervention

The WhereSoft system is the next step in the evolution of WhereNet's award-winning WhereCall™ parts replenishment system, which is now installed in more than 70 automotive factories around the world, including Ford Motor Co. and NUMMI, the Toyota–General Motors joint-venture vehicle-assembly plant. Like the WhereCall system, the WhereSoft parts replenishment system provides an alternative to paper-based Kanban (parts replenishment) systems or hardwired electronic call systems, and offers the twin advantages of low installation costs and unprecedented flexibility in industrial manufacturing environments. In addition, the WhereSoft system requires zero human intervention when requesting more parts.

Supported by Visible Inventory's industrial sensors interfaced to WhereTag™ active wireless transmitters, the WhereSoft system determines the accurate quantity of material remaining at a workstation and transmits this data via the WhereNet RTLS and WiFi infrastructure. This real-time consumption information is ultimately sent to the enterprise manufacturing execution systems supporting the lean manufacturing processes, resulting in just-in-time delivery of parts to the appropriate workstations on the assembly line.

The WhereSoft system continuously monitors inventory levels and senses when an item is removed or added to a container, shelf, or pallet. WhereSoft then dynamically updates quantities and forwards this real-time data to the automotive OEM's enterprise inventory system, which relies on business logic to determine whether more parts need to be sent to the assembly line. Offering 24 different product variations, the sensor-equipped "holding units" range in size from 5" x 5" parts bins to 4' x 4' pallets accommodating up to 5,000 pounds of material.

Like all WhereNet solutions, the WhereSoft system can be installed in less than 90 days, and users can expect a complete return on investment in less than one year. Once the WhereNet RTLS/WLAN infrastructure is installed, the customer can run multiple WhereNet applications on this single architecture. In the automotive industry, WhereNet customers that deploy the WhereSoft parts replenishment system might also use this architecture to deploy vehicle tracking, container tracking, and yard management applications.

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"Our WhereSoft parts replenishment system moves the automotive industry one step closer to manufacturing nirvana — a nearly fully automated factory," said Tom Bacon, vice president and general manager, automotive group WhereNet. "Since bringing the wireless WhereCall application to market in 2000, we have dramatically enhanced lean manufacturing processes and saved automotive OEMs tens of millions of dollars by reducing inventory and enhancing efficiency. By partnering with Visible Inventory, we have expanded the functionality of our system to deliver a completely automated wireless parts-replenishment system that will drive even greater savings for our automotive customers around the world."

"Visible Inventory's solutions have been developed to bring existing manufacturing and supply chain systems one step closer to a fully automated process. Our sensor technology, coupled with our SuppliLink application, brings WhereNet's current award-winning real-time solutions to the next level," said John Toomey, president and CEO of Visible Inventory. "Our partnership with WhereNet reinforces the universal applicability of our real-time sensor-based inventory management solutions, which we have been developing and deploying over the past several years."

About Visible Inventory

Visible Inventory, headquartered in Salem, New Hampshire, provides true real-time inventory management solutions that enhance the performance of existing ERP, SCM and MRO systems. Inventory activity is automatically executed upon in real time, maintaining minimum inventory levels and providing accurate inventory information across the entire supply chain. Visible Inventory's SuppliLink™ intelligent software, coupled with the company's iBin™, iShelf™ and iPallet™ family of sensors and iVision™ Internet communications software, enables today's most progressive supply chain practices to achieve their full potential. A complementary and collaborative solution is Visible Inventory's offering to manufacturers, distributors, and others wishing to optimize inventory levels, replenishment cycles, and vendor or customer partnerships. For more information, call 603-894-5858 or visit www.visibleinventory.com.

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About WhereNet Corp.

WhereNet is the first company to deliver a single wireless location and communication infrastructure that reliably and cost-effectively manages valuable mobile resources. Based on patented, standards-compliant technology resulting from a collective 100+ years of development, the WhereNet real-time solutions have reduced inventory, lowered operating costs, and improved operations, delivering a complete return on investment within 12 months for some of the world's leading companies, including BMW, Coca-Cola, Ford Motor Co., and NYK Logistics. WhereNet's strategic partners include Fortune 500 bellwethers FMC, General Electric, Siemens, Symbol, and Unisys. The company has received the Henry Ford Technology Award; was recognized for strong ROI by Computerworld; was ranked among the top 10 in the InfoWorld 100; and has been recognized as a wireless innovator by Forrester Research, Computerworld ROI, Frontline Solutions, Plant Engineering, and Supply Chain Systems magazines. Headquartered in Santa Clara, California, with offices throughout the United States and Europe, WhereNet is funded by Crosspoint Venture Partners, Foundation Capital, Bay Partners, Crescendo Ventures, and Sun Microsystems. For more information, visit the WhereNet Web site at www.wherenet.com, or call 408-845-8500 (in the U.S.) or +32 3 286 84 50 (in Europe).

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