

# Acsis Upgrades RFID Platform

The latest version of DataLink supports integration with VeriSign's EPC services and improves RFID data and device management.

By Mark Roberti

Sept. 29, 2004—[Acsis](#), a Marlton, N.J.-based supply chain systems specialist, has launched an upgrade to its DataLink middleware platform. The latest version is designed to make it easier for companies to manage RFID readers and the data they get from reading RFID tags. DataLink has also been upgraded to enable it to support Electronic Product Code (EPC) services from [VeriSign](#).

"We always had the power to communicate with any RFID reader or data-collection device, but there was some configuration involved," says Dave Harty, Acsis's chief technology officer. "That was better than writing code all the time, but we wanted to take it even further. Now we have software wizards that let you put in the IP [Internet Protocol] address of the reader. Our software will communicate with the reader, determine the make and model and configure it automatically."

Acsis's DataLink platform was designed to allow companies to gather data from RFID readers, bar code scanners and other data-collection devices and integrate that data with their SAP enterprise resource planning applications. The new version of DataLink also has some enhancements to ensure smooth integration with SAP's Auto-ID Infrastructure (AII), a middleware platform for RFID.

Harty says that companies are introducing slap-and-ship solutions, where tags are placed on products and read as the product leaves a warehouse or cross-dock. There is little back-end integration being done, and customers want to collect the RFID data in different formats and use it in different ways. So the new version of DataLink has an XLST processor—a translation engine that enables XML data to be translated into another computer language based on a style sheet created by the user.

"You put in your style sheet in, and we'll convert the RFID data to whatever format you want," says Harty. "It could be physical markup language file, an HTML file, a Web page. So you can convert the data on the fly to whatever format the host system or database requires. This gives people the ability to use the RFID data right out of the box."

The system also has been upgraded to include an EPC Management module that allows companies to manage EPCs for each stock-keeping unit (SKU). "The system allows you to store numbers locally, so you can assign 10,000 numbers to a particular production facility, but you can manage all numbers centrally," says Harty. "You can even assign blocks of EPCs to a printer or handheld scanner so that they can continue to assign EPCs even if network connectivity goes down for a while."

Acsis has also enhanced DataLink's ability to store data in a hierarchical format. The software has been able to store information about pallets and containers, but now the system will store information about which items are in a case, which cases are on a pallet and which pallet is in a container. The data is stored locally for quick retrieval.

Harty says Acsis worked closely with VeriSign, which was chosen by RFID standards consortium EPCglobal to manage the root Object Name Service (ONS) directory for the EPCglobal Network. ONS points computers to an IP address where data is stored about a particular EPC. DataLink enables users to leverage VeriSign's infrastructure services for collecting and sharing EPC data.

Acsis has also introduced a software developer's kit that includes source code, application program interfaces and documentation for program developers. The aim is to enable companies purchasing the software to develop applications that let them use RFID data in a way that provides value for their own company and integrate the data with their own or third-party applications. Other software companies can also write interfaces that will enable them to take RFID data from Acsis's middleware and use it in their applications.

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