

Help for Boeing, Airbus Suppliers

Sopheon and Siemens Business Services launch a Web-based information service to help aircraft parts makers deploy RFID in sync with the world's largest aircraft manufacturers.

By Jonathan Collins

Nov. 8, 2004—In May, commercial aircraft manufacturing giants Airbus and Boeing announced plans to develop a single RFID specification to be used by both companies to use RFID tags to identify commercial airplane parts (see [Boeing, Airbus Team on Standards](#)). After the two companies run RFID pilots (expected to start next year) with their suppliers, they plan to compare what they learned to set standards for data sharing between the aircraft manufacturers and their parts suppliers and establish procedures for shipping and receiving and other business processes that Boeing and Airbus have in common.

To help the aircraft makers' suppliers deploy RFID systems that match Airbus's and Boeing's eventual implementations, [Sopheon](#) and [Siemens Business Services](#) are offering a new subscription-based information service.

Dubbed [Antenna](#), the new information service is available via a Web site. It aims to be a key resource for information from Boeing and Airbus relating to the development of their RFID plans, specifications from standards bodies such as ISO and IEEE, and articles from news sites (including *RFID Journal*). By making relevant collections of RFID standards, operating procedures, best practices and other data readily available to engineering and procurement teams, Sopheon and Siemens say their service will help reduce the time and effort required by suppliers to match their RFID deployments with recommendations and experience that evolve from Boeing and Airbus RFID plans.

Representatives from Sopheon and Siemens Business Services are part of a steering committee, as are Airbus and Boeing staff, that will ensure that all the material on the site is correct and relevant to the two manufacturers' RFID plans.

"Material on the site will be drawn from sources selected by the steering committee. We are keeping the list of sources as small as possible so that information is not repeated—just high-quality information in line with Airbus's and Boeing's plans," says Huub Rutten, vice president of product research and design at software and services company Sopheon, which is based in Minneapolis.

Sopheon says its software is being used to provide data filtering, management and search capabilities that Antenna subscribers can access via a secure log-in area at the Web site. Siemens is operating the billing and customer management for the service as well as selecting and editing much of the material available at the site.

According to Sopheon, Antenna will target approximately 450 of Boeing's and Airbus's core suppliers of aircraft parts. The Antenna portal is built around Sopheon's Compliance Monitor software, which manages a searchable database of related information as well as enables the collection of articles and other publications from a variety of sources. It also allows subscribers to search material and translate articles in a required language.

Large companies with an enterprise license will pay a yearly subscription of around €75,000 (\$95,000) to use the Antenna portal; smaller firms with less than 100 employees will pay around €25,000 (\$32,000).

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