

# Finding the Right RFID Integrator

No one RFID systems integrator can meet all your needs. A new report assesses 15 integrators to help companies hire the best deployment team.

By Jonathan Collins

Dec. 1, 2004—Competing professional services companies often turn to each other to help complete RFID deployments, according to a new [IDC](#) report that examines the existing and potential services of 15 RFID systems integrators.

"The RFID services market is a symbiotic ecosystem," explains Richard Dean, program director for infrastructure integration and support services at IDC, an information technology advisory firm based in Framingham, Mass. "No one company can offer end-to-end services. Each company has certain unique skills, and where there are gaps, there is a need to bring in partners. That means companies take mixed roles—from prime contractor to subcontractor—across different customer deployments."

The 138-page report is based on the findings of a survey, carried out July through September 2004, of the 15 services vendors and some of their RFID customers. The survey showed that systems integrators have to work with a range of other professional services companies in any single RFID deployment, and that companies hired to work on the project must make sure it is clear which company will be the primary contractor for any RFID deployment. The survey also revealed the need for the lead systems integrator together with its subcontracting partners to have well-defined responsibilities that ensure subcontractors have an understanding of where their responsibilities end.

"The role of a prime vendor and a subcontractor is sometimes a delicate one, but if those integrators are tightly integrated, it can be very productive. If they aren't, it can mean a free-for-all and the project will not only be chaotic but, quite probably, in jeopardy," says Dean. So far, says Dean, there are few examples of bad alliances hampering RFID deployments, but that is partly because the alliances are only just starting to form, reflecting the early stage of this technology deployment.

The report, *Worldwide and U.S. RFID Services Competitive Analysis and Leadership Study, 2004: Disruptive Technology in Waiting and Why the Value Service Chain Matters*, covers service providers ranging in size from IBM, Accenture and BearingPoint down to smaller specialist vendors such as Acsis and Odin Technologies. While the bulk of the systems integrators studied were from the U.S., the survey also included U.K. operator BT and Indian company Patni. The remaining companies described in the report are Capgemini, Computer Sciences Corp. (CSC), Deloitte, HP, Intel, Intermec, Oracle and SAIC.

For companies looking to deploy RFID, the report aims to provide an assessment of the capabilities of the 15 integrators and to serve as a guide to what qualities to consider when selecting an integrator. The report's focus on systems integrators, says IDC, reflects the crucial role of integrators in helping enterprises to not only deploy RFID but also to understand the potential operational and financial impact of deploying the technology. It is also a lucrative role, and integrators are already bulking up their skills and personal for 2005, says IDC.

"These companies are very bullish about the market opportunity for consulting and implementation services next year," says Dean, adding that between 50 to 70 percent of the cost of many RFID deployments are for these services.

According to the report, the worldwide market for RFID-related consulting, implementation and managed services is expected to grow by 47 percent this year alone, to \$239 million, and will reach \$2 billion by 2008. In the survey, approximately 66 percent of enterprise organizations considering an RFID solution in 2004 indicated they would prefer to use external resources to implement the projects.

The report includes feedback from up to three customers of each integrator. The report finds that customers judged their system integrators in four key areas: RFID experience; the quality of the personnel presented to them; the integrator's commitment to ensuring the project is a success such as ensuring and that milestones throughout the project are met; and, finally, verifiable references. Using a five-point rating system, the customers rated their experience regarding a range of criteria such as flexibility, service delivery, service methodology and ability to meet timelines. The responses enabled IDC to create a checklist, included in the report, of what is important in selecting a systems integrator partner.

The report is available at IDC's Web site priced at \$4,500. To view an abstract and table of contents for this study, go to [www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=32183](http://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=32183).

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