

TI, Impinj Seek Gen 2 Interoperability

The two RFID tag suppliers agree to work to ensure interoperability between their EPC Generation 2 chips.

By Jonathan Collins,

Jan. 17, 2005—[Texas Instruments](#), one of the world's largest providers of radio frequency identification (RFID) technology, and [Impinj](#), a fabless provider of RFID tags, have agreed to work together to ensure interoperability between their EPC Generation 2 chips. They believe that this engineering agreement will help speed the uptake of Gen 2 products by reassuring companies deploying the technology that those products will work with equipment from other vendors.

"Interoperability of Gen 2 products from multiple vendors is crucial for rapid adoption of RFID. Through our cooperation, Impinj and TI will ensure a supply of interoperable Gen 2 products from two complementary sources," says Bill Colleran, president and CEO of Seattle-based Impinj.

While neither company will say if the agreement will remain exclusive or whether other vendors might be brought into similar agreements, they do see a requirement for other vendors to follow suit. "We see a need for vendors to work together to push the Gen 2 market forward," says Bill Allen, e-marketing manager for Texas Instruments RFID Systems.

TI and Impinj say their agreement grew out of joint efforts as they worked with other companies on the EPC global Hardware Action Group to develop the Gen 2 standard over the course of 2004.

"This is more than interoperability testing, as this means cooperation is taking place up front before products are produced, rather than making sure interoperability happens on the back end," Colleran says.

In December, [EPCglobal's](#) board of governors announced it had ratified the second-generation Electronic Product Code specification as an EPC standard (see [EPCglobal Ratifies Gen 2 Standard](#)), paving the way for vendors to start making products based on the specification, which was designed to work globally and to be approved as an international standard by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Although EPCglobal's work to produce the Gen 2 standard has resulted in a clear standard, TI and Impinj say ambiguities remain in how some aspects of the standard will be implemented.

"I don't think there is a terribly large amount of effort required to ensure interoperability between Impinj and TI Gen 2 products, because Gen 2 is very well defined. But there are some ambiguities—just a few nips here and there but important to get it right," Colleran says.

EPC Gen 2 aims to overcome limitations of EPCglobal's older Class 0 and Class 1 specifications by providing enhanced features and improved performance including more robust operation in high-density reader environments, superior tag throughput and write ability, and enhanced security and privacy. However, even before the standard was ratified, some vendors, including Impinj, raised concern about the initial performance

capabilities of the equipment complying with the standard (see [Hiccups Expected for Gen 2](#)).

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