

Survey Warns of Low RFID Talent Pool

A trade group says its recent survey points to a shortage of RFID technicians so extreme it could slow the progress of RFID adoption.

By Mary Catherine O'Connor

Mar. 16, 2005—The supply of professionals skilled in RFID is too low to meet demand, according to survey by the [Computing Technology Industry Association](#) (CompTIA), a global IT trade organization that develops certification processes for the IT industry. Of the 51 CompTIA member companies with active RFID plans or deployments (or whose clients have active RFID plans or deployments) who responded to the survey, 80 percent believe there are insufficient numbers of professionals skilled in RFID available for hire today. CompTIA released the results of its survey to coincide with its efforts in developing a certification program for RFID technology workers (see [Group Seeks RFID Tech Training](#)). The survey was Web-based and conducted by CompTIA during the first two weeks of February 2005.

The survey's respondents come from many different industries, including manufacturing, retail, healthcare, financial services and the government. Thirty-three percent of the respondents are value-added resellers and solutions providers. Consultants and systems integrators (21.6 percent) and manufacturers (19.6 percent) were the next two largest groups. Two-thirds of the companies have an annual revenue of up to \$25 million; 22 percent have an annual revenue of \$100 million or more.

"I anticipated that more than 50 percent would say there were insufficient numbers of skilled professionals, but not necessarily 80 percent," says David Sommer, CompTIA's vice president of electronic commerce. "That's pretty telling about the lack of talent out there."

Two-thirds of respondents say training and educating their employees in the technology is one of the biggest challenges they will face in order to succeed in the RFID market, and more than half say the lack of professionals with knowledge in RFID will slow the adoption of the technology.

More than a third (37.3 percent) of the companies say they will definitely offer RFID products and services in the next three years, and 39.2 percent say they would consider it if there is interest from their customers. Companies expect to offer hardware installation and maintenance services (82.1 percent), software implementations (61.5 percent) and other services (51.3). CompTIA plans to conduct this survey again this summer in preparation for its member conference, Aug. 3 to 5, in Las Vegas.

CompTIA, which is based in Oakbrook Terrace, Ill., announced last week that six organizations have agreed to join it to develop a vendor-neutral certification process to measure RFID skills for individuals working with the technology. These organizations are [AIM Global](#), [FC Business Systems](#), [Intermec Technologies](#), [OTA Training](#), [ScanSource](#), [Symbol Technologies](#) and [Texas Instruments](#).

Sommer says he expects this committee to grow to 15 to 20 organizations within the next two months and that it will take the group eight to 10 months to develop the certification. A cross section of industries were invited onto the committee to ensure that the certification addresses the hardware, software and business-process

elements of an RFID deployment, he says.

The certification will be a blueprint that CompTIA will offer on a licensing basis to training firms, Sommer says. These training firms will then develop exams based on the certification and offer them to companies looking to certify employees. CompTIA has developed other certification programs designed to validate a range of IT skills.

Sommer believes that hundreds of systems integration companies and thousands of individuals need a certification process to measure RFID capabilities in order to keep up with current and future demand.

CompTIA is also developing an RFID pilot project template for its members, which will include a sample timeline and step-by-step guide to setting up and initiating an RFID pilot project. Sommer says the template will be available to its members in May.

CompTIA is funded partially by fees associated with certification training, as well as by membership fees and revenue from products, services, events and publications that the trade organization offers.

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