

Needed: RFID Subject Matter Experts

End users can help create an industry standard certification test, which is necessary to ensure a skilled workforce to deploy RFID technology.

By Mark Roberti

Apr. 25, 2005—Last week, I attended the first foundation committee meeting established by the Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA) to create an industry standard certification test for people who will install and maintain RFID readers, printers and other RFID hardware. This is a critical effort that end users need to support. I'll explain why and what precisely the committee needs to make this effort successful. First, a little history.

Back in November, CompTIA and the Association for Automatic Identification and Mobility (AIM Global) teamed up to start the process of creating an RFID skills certification test. RFID Journal threw its support behind this effort, because our readers were telling us that there were not enough people with RFID skills and no way to objectively judge skills.

There are some independent companies that claim to offer certification training, but the certificate carries no weight because it's something these companies created. And if 100 training companies offer 100 different certifications, there's no way for someone hiring an employee to know what skills that person has, even if he or she has taken some course. So a standardized certification test is needed if the RFID industry is to grow, just as a standardized air interface protocol and standard data formats are needed.

CompTIA does mainly certification tests for those in the IT industry. This is its first foray into automatic identification, but since it had the support of AIM, I felt it could create a credible certification test that would mean something to end users, systems integrators and value-added resellers looking to hire people with RFID skills. CompTIA has a proven system for doing this. It starts with creating a foundation committee to scope out the skills that will be tested. The committee then brings in subject matter experts (SMEs) to begin to develop questions, which CompTIA can then turn into a test.

And this is where we need you. We need subject matter experts—RF engineers and others with hands on experience deploying RFID systems—to flesh out the skills that will be tested and develop questions. We have a mix of vendors, systems integrators and training companies on the foundation committee. What we are lacking is input from end users. It's critical that we have this, because the end users know what skills they want in the people they will be hiring. I know RFID project teams are working overtime right now, but what's involved is providing one person for a few days in August to help flesh out the test.

The people who participate will be able to put on their resume that they were subject matter experts for the test and will achieve automatic certification. Their companies will not only gain insight into the certification test; they will also help to create a certification program that will enable them to evaluate future potential hires.

I wouldn't be taking time out of my busy schedule to participate in these meetings if I didn't believe this was

crucial to the adoption of RFID. As the technology spreads, companies will need skilled people to install and maintain the RFID infrastructure. We need to create a standardized test that training companies can use to develop training courses and that can ensure people have the basic skills needed to do the job. This will ensure a steady flow of people able to deploy the technology as adoption rises.

If you are an end user and can lend us one of your engineers or an RF expert for a few days in August, please send me an e-mail (mroberti@rfidjournal.com) and I will put you in touch with the right people on the foundation committee. Please, help make this happen.

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