

The U.K. RFID systems integrator joins forces with hardware makers Philips, Rafsec and Feig to provide portal systems specifically for retail and automotive supply chains.

By Jonathan Collins

July 7, 2005—A consortium led by U.K. RFID systems integrator [Intelligent](#) has launched UHF RFID portal systems designed specifically for use in retail and automotive supply chains. "These are as close to an off-the-shelf portal as you can get," says Andy Chadbourne, marketing and communications manager at Intelligent, based in Stockport.

The portal systems draw on RFID hardware components from [Philips Semiconductors](#), [UPM Rafsec](#) and [Feig Electronic](#) that have already been tested to work together. The companies and Intelligent formed a consortium that put in a bid to develop an RFID system for a pilot program at a large, unnamed European retailer. The work produced on that project served as the basis for the newly launched retail and automotive portal systems.



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containing food, liquids and metal in the retailer's supply chain. The portal developed for that pilot works with a range of tagged plastic returnable transit packaging (RTP) containers, primarily supplied by Intellident's parent company, [LINPAC](#). The tags can be applied externally (with protection) or embedded when the container is manufactured.

The portal developed for the pilot uses readers (interrogators) and reader antennas from Feig Electronic. It was designed to work specifically with UPM Rafsec RFID labels made with Philips chips (Philips Ucode EPC 1.19) and Rafsec tag antennas. It also uses Intellident's Vision software to control and process data written to and collected from RFID tags and smart labels. Intellident and systems integration start-up [RFIQ Solutions](#) will provide systems integration services for deploying the portal.

Alex Boellaard, European sales director at Rafsec, noted that his company gained a great deal of information by working alongside Intellident and the other partners on this pilot. This enabled Rafsec to develop a specific tag and label design with input from both Philips and Feig.

"All the companies were involved in a joint effort to make this application work, and we think this holistic approach is important. We learned a lot by working closely on a specific project," Boellaard says.

According to Rafsec, the tag antenna and label it developed and tuned specially for the retail application will be generally available directly from the company. Still, having worked with Intellident and the other companies on a specific implementation, Rafsec advises customers looking to deploy similar RFID systems to use the portal systems already developed.

"Every member of the group is free to sell these products independently, but working on this project made us realize that there is a lot of systems integration work to do on the application itself, and so we would refer customers to Intellident and the other members of the consortium," says Boellaard.

According to Intellident, the team that worked on the retail supply chain portal also developed a portal specifically designed for the automotive industry. Designed to help track reusable metal containers and racks for transporting automotive parts, this portal was originally developed for a European automotive manufacturer. The automaker is now using it to manage assets and track the delivery of parts from a factory to a central distribution center. Intellident says it is also working with three automotive parts suppliers to assess their business case for using RFID.

In addition, the consortium has opened a new joint RFID showcase facility to demonstrate its portals, as well as the different offerings from the consortium members, in a working distribution center in Crewe, U.K., operated by the LINPAC Group.