

RFID News Roundup

Wal-Mart sues former employee over RFID trade secrets; SmartCode announces 7.5-cent Gen 2 inlay; CAEN releases four new Gen 2 readers; WJ Communications announces Gen 2 reader; Scout Software launches tag-testing application; new HF tag for textile applications.

Oct. 7, 2005—The following are news announcements made during the week of Oct 3.

Wal-Mart Sues Former Employee Over RFID Trade Secrets

Wal-Mart has filed a suit in the Benton County Circuit Court against David Smith, a former employee who worked for the retailer as a business analyst in its information systems division transportation group before giving notice of his resignation this week. The suit claims Smith violated the Arkansas Trade Secret Act and common law regarding trade secrets. The retailer maintains that confidential data concerning Wal-Mart's RFID program—including pricing and cost, future planning and strategic information, and budget details—were sent from Smith's corporate e-mail account via 45 e-mail messages and more than 100 e-mail attachments, between July 27 and Sept. 7 of this year. Wal-Mart is also suing Smith for breach of contract and has asked for a restraining order to keep Smith or anyone acting in conjunction with him from sharing any more confidential details about Wal-Mart's RFID-related activities.

SmartCode Announces 7.5-cent Gen 2 Inlay

SmartCode, an RFID hardware manufacturer based in Tel Aviv, Israel, has announced its Gen 2 Quickstart Program, under which it is selling its SL-EPC-2630 EPC UHF Gen 2 Class 1 inlays for 7.5 cents each in orders of 1 million inlays or more, and 7.2 cents apiece in quantities of 10 million or more, if the orders are placed before January 2006. Deliveries for these orders will span 2006. The general pricing for the inlays is expected to rise to an undisclosed amount after January; however, SmartCode says it will match any price for EPC Gen 2 inlays offered by another inlay manufacturer in orders of 1 million or more. The SL-EPC-2630, produced on an adhesive backing, can be purchased in rolls and applied directly to packaging. The inlays can also be converted into smart labels, which can then be printed with text and bar codes.

CAEN Releases Four New Gen 2 Readers

CAEN, a reader manufacturer in Viareggio, Italy, has released four new RFID interrogators for the European UHF RFID market. The A829EU, a compact reader with an internal antenna and a 1-meter read range, reads tags based on the ISO 18000-6A/B, Philips UCODE EPC 1.19 and EPC Class1 Gen2 and Gen1 protocols. It is fully compliant with ETSI 300-220 regulations for operation at 869.525 MHz and can be connected via USB port to a computer running Windows 98/2000/ME/XP, Windows CE 4.2, or Linux 2.40 and greater. The A946EU is a reader module developed for OEM applications and designed for integration into other devices. It is compliant with the new ETSI 302-208 regulation for operation between 865 and 868 MHz, requiring RFID readers to "listen before talking" in order to keep channels clear of traffic. The A946EU can read tags based on the ISO 18000-6A/B, Philips UCODE EPC 1.19, EPC Class1 Gen1 and Gen2 protocols, and can support one antenna with a read range of up to 8 meters (26 feet). The A948 and A949EU interrogators are also ETSI 302-208 compliant and can read the same types of tags as the A829EU and A946EU. Both are capable of an 8-meter read range, as well. The A948 has two serial communication ports, as well as USB and Ethernet 10/100 ports and four antenna ports. It can function as a stand-alone fixed reader or be built into a portal reader structure. The A949EU, also a stand-alone reader, has a more rugged casing and one antenna

port, and can be mounted on a forklift. Pricing has not yet been provided.

WJ Communications Announces Gen 2 Reader

WJ Communications, a designer and supplier of RF solutions for the wireless infrastructure and RFID reader markets, has released a new UHF RFID interrogator—the WJ SR2200—able to read EPC UHF Class 1 Gen 2 and ISO 18000-6B compliant tags, as well as EPC Class 1, 0 and 0+ tags. The new reader uses a high-speed digital signal processor to convert analog waves into digital information and process RF signals based on advanced algorithms. The WJ SR2200 can support one to four monostatic or bistatic antenna, offers a read range up to 10 meters (30 feet) and has four pairs of input/output ports to support devices such as light or motion sensors or material-handling equipment. The reader is available now, both direct to end users as a complete reader, or on an OEM basis as a reader module. Pricing, however, has not yet been disclosed.

Scout Software Launches Tag-Testing Application

Scout Software, a maker of supply chain management software in Stillwater, Minn., has released a software program called Scout RFID Tools, designed to help RFID end users predict how well or poorly various manufacturers' RFID tags will function within a given environment. To use the software, a user first enters the dimensions of the area in which it will test the readability (in free air) of each RFID tag: for example, a four-by-four grid of 2-square-foot cells. The software generates a grid based on this information, and the end user establishes a visual representation of that grid, to scale, in the physical area where the tests will be held, by placing tape on the floor to match the grid. The software then directs the tester to position the tag within each cell of the grid, which triggers an RFID reader. The software pulls data on the signal strength of each read of the tag as it moves across the grid, then converts this data into a 3-D representation. Strong signal strength is shown as green balls, medium strength as yellow balls and poor signal as red balls. This image can then be superimposed on a digital image of the area in which the tag was tested, to illustrate which zones had strong reads and where they were poor (likely due to RF interference in that zone). The company wrote the software in Microsoft's .NET platform and with Microsoft's Direct X 3D imaging tool, widely used in the creation of video games. The software is available now, though pricing information is not yet available.

New HF Tag for Textile Applications

Datamars, a Lugano, Switzerland, provider of RFID tags for textile applications, has released a new RFID tag for use in laundries. The T-BT1315 tag operates at 13.56 MHz and can withstand temperatures ranging from -40 degrees F to 248 degrees F. It is compliant with ISO standards 15693 and 18000-3 and has a 40-centimeter (16-inch) read range. The T-BT1315 can be used to track uniforms, mats, mops and other textiles. The round tag measures 15mm (0.61 inch) in diameter and 2.9mm (0.11 inch) thick. It can store a 64-bit unique ID and has 864 bits of read-write memory. The T-BT1315 is available now, though pricing has not yet been disclosed.

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