

IBM Launches Online Resource for RFID Software Developers

The informational Web site, part of IBM's alphaWorks, includes a new application designed to help developers create solutions linking RFID data to enterprise applications.

By Jonathan Collins

Aug. 1, 2006—IBM has launched a new RFID informational section within its alphaWorks Web site for software developers. In addition to providing introductory and advanced information on developing RFID applications, the new alphaWorks RFID Web site lets visitors download IBM's new RFID Integrated Solution Enablement (RISE) software application, as well as two other development kits released late last year.

According to IBM, the launch of the site was spurred by a growing interest in RFID applications among companies, and by its concern regarding the low number of application developers familiar with RFID implementation. "We have noticed that RFID is becoming more pronounced in the enterprise developer market," says Chris Spencer, emerging technologies strategist at IBM alphaWorks. The alphaWorks RFID Web site, he explains, "enables IBM to push adoption by reducing the cost of developing RFID applications, as well as get feedback from RFID developers." IBM believes such feedback can help it develop other offerings for companies deploying RFID, while the tools facilitate the promotion of its WebSphere application server environment.

According to IBM, all three software applications, downloadable for free, can help cut costs and speed up the overall implementation of RFID systems. The RISE application is designed to help developers produce applications that can use RFID data and tie it into enterprise back-end applications incorporating IBM's WebSphere application server environment. The application enables developers to draw models of potential RFID solution implementations utilizing prebuilt components, test them against specific behaviors and variables and tie them to specific devices and platforms for deployment. As a result, developers can see how the RFID solution works among different requirements, and how information would flow across various software components and devices within the solution.

RISE uses a repository of more than 300 RFID-specific resources, including technical articles, tutorials and information. It was developed by researchers at IBM's Thomas J. Watson Research Center in the United States, and its Ubiquitous Computing Lab in Korea.

The site's two other development kits, the RFID Device Development Kit (DDK) and the Application Level Events (ALE) Preview for RFID, were initially made available on the alphaWorks Web site last October (see IBM Offering RFID Development Tools). The tools enable RFID applications developers to create and test RFID software before making software and hardware investments in the technology.

The DDK application is designed for developing code to run on interrogators, handhelds, point-of-sale terminals and other devices at the edge of an RFID network, while the ALE Preview aims to speed the development of communications applications for sharing RFID data with back-office systems.

The ability to test and run systems without a full hardware deployment could assist small to midsize companies in more quickly deploying RFID systems, IBM claims. "The Device Development Kit can act as a premises server so that companies can still develop RFID applications without having to invest in all the hardware," says Spencer.

To download the free tools, developers must first register at [IBM's Web site](#). Registered users will be asked to complete questionnaires about the software after downloading it.

IBM is promoting the site with a number of its software-developer partners. One such partner, [Extol](#), believes the new tools will definitely help smaller companies investigate RFID for their businesses. "RFID is primarily a device-centric initiative," says Steve Rosen, Extol's VP of marketing. By helping end users develop and manage applications for using RFID devices, he says, "IBM is helping the mid-market move toward RFID by making available these specific RFID resources."

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