

# Checkpoint Demonstrates RFID Capabilities

The company says its role in a recent EPC Gen 2 test in Europe shows off the systems integration services it offers retailers.

By Mark Roberti

Jan. 16, 2007—Back in October 2006, *RFID Journal* revealed that Checkpoint Systems, a Thorofare, N.J.-based provider of radio frequency identification and electronic article surveillance (EAS) systems, had laid off its dedicated RFID team and was planning to focus its RFID efforts on the retail sector (see Checkpoint Refocuses RFID Effort).

The company has recently revealed its role in a highly publicized test of second-generation Electronic Product Code (EPC) technology in a dense-reader environment. It says the project shows off the capabilities it offers retail customers.

The test was held at a Metro distribution center last September at the behest of a group within the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) that deals with electromagnetic compatibility and radio spectrum matters. A total of 36 dock doors were outfitted with interrogators based on the second-generation EPC standard to see if they would interfere with one another (see ETSI Tests Show EPC Scalable in Europe). Complying with the ETSI listen before talk (LBT) requirements, the tested systems achieved at least a 98.5 percent read rate from multiple tags on pallets wheeled simultaneously through the dock doors.

Checkpoint evaluated and selected the hardware, then configured and installed all 36 RFID portals. IBM, Checkpoint and the interrogator manufacturers were all involved in testing the readers.

Checkpoint has traditionally installed RF-based EAS systems at point-of-sale stations and store exits to reduce shoplifting. Now, however, it has invested in developing the capabilities needed to help retailers track goods in store stockrooms, and to manage inventory.

"We're leveraging our long history of installing RF-based systems in large numbers of retail stores," says Checkpoint's CEO, George Off. "We want to help retailers manage inventory in the back of the store and bring more value to our retail customers." Off says Checkpoint is one of the few systems integrators with a global services arm to install RFID systems in many retail stores simultaneously.

"RFID is a huge industry, with many applications," says Off. "We have to pick our spots. We decided to leverage our experience providing RF-based security tags to help retailers manage their inventory. We want to be more of a solutions provider in the RFID space. We also see a big opportunity in helping them with source tagging, where we have a lot of experience."

Gerd Wolfram, director of IT strategy, buying and development services for MGI Metro Group Information Technology, a Metro subsidiary that provides in-house IT services, explains that his firm chose Checkpoint for the test installation because the companies have worked together extensively. "We have a long history

with Checkpoint on the EAS side, and they installed dual [RFID and EAS] system gates at the checkout in our Future Store," he says. Metro opened its Future Store in 2003 as a place where it could test RFID and other technologies under real-world conditions (see Metro Opens 'Store of the Future').

According to Wolfram, the hardware installation and testing went smoothly. "The hardest part was getting people to pull the pallets through all 36 doors at the same time," he says. "We had a lot of false starts."

RELATED\_ARTICLES Wolfram believes Checkpoint's experience in installing RF-based EAS systems (as opposed to acousto-magnetic and electromagnetic systems) is relevant in the RFID market. "We took the strategic decision to harmonize the different EAS systems we have in different parts of the company," he says. "We decided to go with RF everywhere in the belief that this would position us to one day combine EAS and RFID."

Off says Checkpoint plans to introduce several new RFID products aimed at the RFID market later this year, but declined to describe them—or to give a date for the launch. "We have a very ambitious agenda," he says.

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