RFID News Roundup

Axcess lowers tag price; Accu-Sort unveils self-tuning HF reader; Feig Electronic expands westward; SeeControl releases UID edition inventory software; OTA Training offers online RFID course.

Jan. 19, 2007—The following are news announcements made during the week of Jan. 15.

Axcess Lowers Tag Price
Axcess International, a Dallas-based provider of active RFID systems, has lowered the price of its battery-powered asset tags from a suggested retail price of $34 each to $10. The company says it has done this to enable its customers to attain a return on their RFID investments more quickly. The tag uses a proprietary air-interface protocol and must be utilized in combination with an Axcess International reader, which can be operated in conjunction with third-party tracking software. The reader costs $545. To use the tag and reader, customers must also purchase the company's OnlineSupervisor (OLS) tag middleware and software package, for a cost of $4,250. The OLS is browser-based and enables users to commission tags, correlate tag IDs with descriptions of the assets to which the tags are attached and establish read zones via a drag-and-drop map-based infrastructure. The OLS can also track and update asset inventory and the dwell time of tagged assets in RFID-controlled areas. Operators can set alerts to be triggered if certain assets leave an interrogation zone. Customers do not need to purchase a set number of tags to receive the discounted tag price. The tags transmit data over 315 MHz but can also be placed in a sleep-mode to conserve battery power. When in sleep mode, the tags can be awoken by 125 KHz exciters stationed at choke points, where users need to be able to sense the movement of tagged assets.

Accu-Sort Unveils Self-Tuning HF Reader
Accu-Sort Systems, a provider of RFID systems for production work-in-progress tracking and automated tag applicators, has announced improvements to its EZReader-HF RFID interrogator, which can encode and read high-frequency (13.56 MHz) tags compliant with the ISO 15693 and ISO 14443 standards, as well as NXP's I-Code and Texas Instruments' Tag-it protocols. The reader has been enhanced with a patent-pending auto-tune feature, allowing a user to tune, or "match," each EZReader-HF's antenna. Matching is the process of ensuring that an antenna is securely linked to a reader, as well as making sure it transmits at the proper frequency. Without this automatic tuner, explains Troy Herman, Accu-Sort manager for North American distribution, Accu-Sort personnel and third-party integrators had to spend 15 to 20 minutes installing and tuning each reader and antenna. A production facility might require at least 150 readers for work-in-progress tracking. Manual tuning, therefore, can result in significant time and labor costs for an end-user company, which generally does not have the in-house expertise to install and tune the readers itself. The EZReader-HF, with the automated antenna-tuning feature, will be widely available in March, and is currently being beta-tested. Companies interested in beta-testing the reader should contact Accu-Sort. The reader costs $1,700 and can be used with one of three Accu-Sort antenna designs for mid-range, long-range or conveyor-mounted read ranges. The antennas cost roughly $500 apiece.

Feig Electronic Expands Westward
German RFID hardware manufacturer Feig Electronic has opened a North American subsidiary, Feig Electronics, to provide technical and sales support to U.S. and Canadian customers of its OBID i-scan family

of RFID interrogators. Until now, the company has hired contractors in the United States to provide these services to Feig's OBID users. The company hopes the subsidiary, based in Tucker, Ga., near Atlanta, will enable Feig to gain larger market share in the North American market.

SeeControl Releases UID Edition Inventory Software

San Mateo, Calif.-based SeeControl, a provider of real-time inventory tracking software, has announced the release of a UID (Unique Identification) edition of its product suite. The Web-based system links asset inventory data collected from RFID tags, as well as linear and 2-D bar codes, and centralizes that data in a database updated in real-time. SeeControl says the Department of Defense (DOD) has mandated that all assets and property owned by the DOD, including assets in the possession of contractors, be tracked with unique identification numbers and codes in accordance with MIL STD 130, a DOD specification for contractors. Such contractors can choose from a range of labeling and data structure options, SeeControl states, and can use the UID edition of the software to help them comply with the protocol. The UID edition of the software will be generally available in the second quarter of 2007, with a beta version currently being offered.

OTA Training Offers Online RFID Course

RFID education provider OTA Training, which conducts multiday RFID training courses in the United States, Europe and the Middle East, has launched an online course. This course, which it calls eLearning, consists of 12 self-directed modules enabling students to learn RFID basics, system architecture and how to build and maintain a passive RFID tagging system. Each module contains multimedia exercises, real-world practice scenarios and summary exercises to reinforce learning. Students interested in the course should have a foundation of basic computer networking principals and engineering concepts. IT training organization CompTIA has qualified the eLearning curriculum as an "Authorized Quality Curriculum" that will prepare students for the CompTIA RFID+ certification exam, which students may also take as part of the eLearning program. The cost is $1,995 for the main eLearning training, and $495 for the CompTIA exam. Registration is available online. Those interested in CompTIA RFID+ certification can also attend a special fast-track training and certification preparation course at RFID Journal LIVE! 2007—to be held in Orlando, Fla., from Apr. 30 to May 2—offered in partnership with RFID4U.

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