

Blue Vector Announces Mobile Edge Manager

The mobile device is designed to enable end users to add intelligence to their RFID deployments.

By Mary Catherine O'Connor

March 20, 2007—The emergence of mobile RFID interrogators, such as handhelds or forklift-mounted readers, has allowed end users to expand the area over which they can read RFID tags. As RFID deployments grow, however, the ability to collect tag and sensor data from those readers and add business intelligence to that information becomes more important. As such, a number of companies have introduced reader controllers or appliances designed to accomplish that task.

One such company, [Blue Vector Systems](#), has just released a mobile controller. This new product is a battery-powered version of its Edge Manager, an appliance device that collects RFID tag data from readers—UHF (proprietary active, semi-active or Gen 2 passive) or HF (ISO 15693/18000-3)—and links that data back into any back-end software system, such as enterprise resource planning programs from [Oracle](#) or [SAP](#). Before sending the data to the back end, however, the Mobile Edge Manager will apply business rules to the data collected from the readers. This, says John Beans, Blue Vector's vice president of marketing, makes the device an extension of the back-end software and prevents unwanted data from being sent to the that software.

The Mobile Edge Manager can run on either an external power source (AC or DC) or its own internal battery, and is designed to expand end users' RFID networks into remote areas where power sources might be unattainable or intermittent, such as a vast warehouse, transportation yard, or rural or agricultural setting. The Mobile Edge Manager uses a Wi-Fi link to send data to back-end systems. Because it contains a GPRS/EVDO module for sending data over a cellular network, however, it can also be deployed in areas without Wi-Fi coverage. The Mobile Edge Manager can also send its location data to back-end systems, which is valuable for applications in which the end user needs to know the Mobile Edge Manager's location—for example, when attached to a truck transporting goods. The location data comes from a GPS receiver connected to the Mobile Edge Manager via a USB cable.

According to Beans, applications for the Mobile Edge Manager include collecting data from mobile RFID readers moving around large manufacturing plants, where tags might be embedded into manufacturing stations to report parts locations for a work-in-process application, or for tracking tagged goods moved by RFID-enabled forklifts in a large distribution center or yard. Because the Mobile Edge Manager can switch between internal battery power and external AC or DC power, an end user might mount it on a trailer and wire it with AC power from the truck hauling the trailer. When the trailer is detached from the truck and stored in a yard, however, the Mobile Edge Manager can use its internal battery to send data to back-end systems over a Wi-Fi or a cellular network. It can operate for up to 150 hours on battery power, and is able to automatically recharge its battery when an external source of AC or 12V DC power is available.

RELATED_ARTICLES The Mobile Edge Manager could also be used to send sensor data between a network of readers and back-end systems. In this application, for example, it might be mounted on a truck and driven through a vineyard to collect temperature data from readers mounted in the vineyard, interrogating

battery-powered temperature sensors in the soil or on the grape vines. If the data collected were to indicate a dangerously lower temperature, vineyard staff might be instructed to cover the vines.

Beans says an end user has completed a beta test of the Mobile Edge Manager, but he would not disclose the name of the company or describe its application. The Mobile Edge Manager is currently available in production quantities. Pricing information has not yet been released.

Copyright ©2005 RFID Journal, Inc. All Rights Reserved