

# Tyco to Mass-Produce RFID Readers

The company has licensed technology from ThingMagic and will begin manufacturing readers this spring.

Feb. 24, 2003 - ThingMagic said today that it has signed an agreement with Tyco Retail Solutions Group under which Tyco will manufacture multi-protocol, multi-frequency RFID readers based on ThingMagic's Agile RFID reader design.

ThingMagic, a Cambridge, Mass.-based technology design and development company, was hired by the Auto-ID Center to develop a reference specification for an RFID reader that could operate at high frequency (13.56 MHz) and ultra-high frequency (860-928 MHz). ThingMagic has built upon that open specification. The reader will be able to read both HF and UHF tags carrying the Auto-ID Center's Electronic Product Code as well as tags that conform to ISO 15693. Bernd Schoner, managing partner at ThingMagic, says the company plans to make the reader compliant with ISO 18000-6.

Tyco's will begin manufacturing the readers at its factory in Puerto Rico this spring. The readers will be sold under the Sensormatic brand, but will be distributed by Tyco's ADT division and by channel partners. The company hasn't established pricing yet.

The deal is significant because Tyco is the first company to announce plans to mass-produce readers based on the Auto-ID Center's specification. Several vendors have developed readers based on the spec, but these are being sold mainly in small quantities for pilots.

Tyco is also a \$36 billion company with more than 50,000 sales representatives around the world. The company installs and supports Sensormatic electronic article surveillance equipment to thousands of retailers and manufacturers around the world and is in a good position to drive adoption of the technology.

Some RFID proponents believe that RFID will eventually replace EAS tags as a way of preventing theft. A source at Tyco says the company's view is that its customers will likely want EAS, or RFID or a combination of the two and that the company is well placed to provide whatever technology customers need.

Sensormatic expects the main market for the readers this year to be retailers and manufacturers looking to deploy RFID technology in the supply chain. The company believes that the first deployments in stores for tracking individual items will begin next year.

A Tyco executive says that the company will support open standards and was interested in the ThingMagic technology because it works at more than one frequency and handles more than one protocol. "We don't believe that one tag is going to be used for every application," the executive says.

The company has developed the software infrastructure to gather data from RFID readers and pass it to enterprise applications. The company may also get into the business of converting RFID chips into finished labels. The company has expertise in label making and source tagging from its EAS business.

The multi-year deal is also a breakthrough for ThingMagic, a small design and development firm. "Strategically, we decided not to become a manufacturing and sales company and remain focused on design and development of new RFID technologies," says Schoner. "So we were looking for a strong partner that complements our skills. Sensormatic not only has the manufacturing capabilities, but it has a strong sales force and they have a strong system integration capability."

[RFID Journal Home](#)

Copyright ©2005 RFID Journal, Inc. All Rights Reserved