

Trade Show Badges Trigger Targeted Messages

Alliance Tech's system employs long-range passive EPC RFID tags to identify conference attendees and play select informational videos on nearby screens, as well as generate sales leads.

By Mary Catherine O'Connor

Aug. 3, 2007—As an estimated 40,000 attendees stroll the exhibit hall at the Radiological Society of North America's convention this November, most will be wearing conference badges containing passive UHF EPC Gen 2 tags. This will allow Alliance Tech, a provider of management and information technology solutions for the meeting and events industry, to offer a number of attendee-tracking services. Such services will be aimed at providing the RSNA and the convention exhibitors a means to improve their interaction with attendees while deepening their understanding of those attendees' interests.

Smart Messaging, a new service Alliance Tech will debut at the show, is designed to enable exhibitors to target sales messages—in the form of advertorial videos—to individual attendees. Next to each display screen located throughout the exhibit floor, Alliance Tech will mount an RFID interrogator, which will collect the unique registration number encoded to each tag in its read range (the interrogators will be tuned to read tags only in front of the monitor).

Using an application linking it to the show's registration database, the Alliance Tech software will pull select data associated with each badge ID detected, then choose which advertorials to play, based on each advertiser's specifications. Such specs might stipulate, for instance, that when a cardiac radiology specialist is located in front of the monitor, only specific videos featuring products geared toward that subset of radiologists should be played. If more than one attendee is before the monitor, explains Roger Lewis, executive vice president for Alliance Tech, the software will call up a variety of videos to play, based on the different job titles or departments of the audience.

This offering builds upon the basic services package that Alliance Tech, in collaboration with event registration company Experient, offers for industry trade shows, conferences or other large events. The fundamental offering in this package is what Lewis calls "Lead Potential." This offers event exhibitors a means of identifying those event attendees who spend a specific amount time in their booth—how much time is up to the exhibitor—but never engage with the company's staffers long enough for them to collect those visitors' names, companies, titles or contact information through the conventional methods: scanning the bar code printed on a visitor's conference badge or reading the badge's short-range RFID inlay.

With the Lead Potential service, an Alliance Tech installs sufficient interrogators inside a company's exhibit space to read the RFID tag—Alien Technology's UHF Gen 2 tags and readers will be used at the RSNA show—attached to any attendee in the booth who remains for a specified amount of time. That amount might be 10 or 20 minutes, says Lewis, and can be set at the discretion of each exhibitor.

According to Lewis, an event organizer can decide whether Alliance Tech should provide exhibitors with direct contact information (such as phone numbers or e-mail addresses) of attendees whose badge IDs are collected as part of the Lead Potential service. Some organizers, he explains, prefer that all attendee data be

shared with exhibitors as part of the Lead Potential offering. At the RSNA convention, however, only information printed on the badges—the attendee's name, job title and company—will be sent to exhibitors. An exhibitor looking to contact an attendee might choose to research the company and determine that person's address so it can send a mailer. Alternatively, exhibitors may opt to dig further and acquire an attendee's phone number or e-mail address.

Alliance Tech generates customizable reports for exhibitors based on the tag data collected. These reports are designed to inform an exhibitor regarding which attendees visited its booth, how long they stayed and the positions they hold within their companies. Another offering the solutions provider is developing is called Smart Notification, designed to alert a company's sales force—via text message, for example—when anyone from a predetermined watch list enters its booth area. For example, if the CEO of a firm to which an exhibitor targets its products were to enter a booth, the sales force would be alerted to locate and approach that individual.

Lewis emphasizes that when they register for an event, attendees are made aware of the presence of an RFID tag in each badge, and told that some exhibitors might contact them or send personalized messages based on data collected from a network of tag readers in both the exhibit hall and educational sessions. Attendees uncomfortable with such an arrangement can remove the tag, he says, adding, "We generally see a 1 percent opt-out rate."

RELATED_ARTICLES That extra value does not come gratis, however. Exhibitors will be required to pay up to \$12,000 for the Smart Messaging, Lead Potential and reporting services, depending on how large a particular booth is, and how many readers are required. The event producers also benefit from Alliance Tech's offerings, Lewis says, by having interrogators stationed at the entrances of large auditoriums and smaller breakout rooms so they can track the types and numbers of attendees for various panel sessions and keynote speeches.

Steve Drew, the RSNA's assistant executive director, says his organization believes the use of long-range, passive tags in event badges will help it and event exhibitors better understand the needs and preferences of attendees. In addition, he states, it will also offer a means of getting more value from event participation.

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