

# EPCglobal Launches Consumer Web Site

Its mission is to educate the general public about how RFID and EPC technologies can be used to better their lives.

By Beth Bacheldor

Dec. 6, 2007—The campaign to educate consumers about RFID's potential is heating up. Last week, [EPCglobal](#) unveiled its [Discover RFID](#) Web site, designed to inform consumers about how RFID and EPC technologies can be used to improve everyday life.

The organization's goal is to raise awareness about RFID in general, says Marisa Jimenez, EPCglobal's director of public policy for Europe. "Not long ago, when we talked RFID, we were talking about standards. But now we are getting to a point where we are going to see more consumer applications. And it isn't so much a question about the standards process, but how those standards are going to be implemented into real life," she says. "Consumers are going to be confronted with RFID in their daily lives, and it is obviously necessary to have an informed public. And we think [an informed public] is absolutely necessary for the successful implementation of the technology. Without consumer trust and consumer confidence, RFID won't work—and to get that trust and confidence, we need to tell consumers about why the technology is beneficial."

The site features a variety of real-world examples of RFID applications that directly affect—and ultimately improve—the lives of people worldwide. In a graphical, interactive feature, site visitors can click on a timeline to read examples of such applications. For instance, the entry for 8 a.m. offers a vignette explaining how RFID's use in a cold chain can help ensure perishable food stays fresh as it moves from the manufacturer to the retailer. The story details a four-year pilot, supported by the European Union (EU), attaching RFID tags and temperature sensors to bins and crates of meat, to measure and record storage and shipping conditions.

In another example, visitors can learn about how a Japanese woman is able to quickly and easily find the right size clothing in a Tokyo shop, thanks to garments outfitted with removable RFID tags. Mirrors on the sales floor incorporate RFID interrogators and built-in LCD screens, while dressing rooms are equipped with RFID readers and monitors—all of which can provide the shopper with details about the garment, such as the manufacturer and washing instructions, as well as the additional sizes and colors that are available, and where she can find them on the racks.

The characters in the vignettes may be fictitious, but the applications are real, says Rob Thibault, director of external affairs for [GS1 US](#), the U.S. branch of international standards-setting organization [GS1](#), of which EPCglobal is a subsidiary. EPCglobal has been working on RFID standards for several years, but Thibault and Jimenez say the time has come for it to broaden its focus to consumer education. "As we looked out there," Thibault says, "there wasn't a source of information for consumers about the applications, and about the technology. And now we are moving much faster, going from supply chain applications to consumer-facing applications."

The site is designed to illustrate a range of RFID applications, not just those complying with EPCglobal standards. What's more, Thubault says, the content, presented in English, is intended to be easily understood.

"We decided to start from ground zero. The idea was to start with the idea that someone will come to the site and not really know anything about RFID," he explains. "And we are looking at RFID broadly. The site is not technical—it uses plain language to explain the technology, the applications, and how all of it is helping improve lives by making products safer, making products more readily available or making shopping easier."

Discover RFID includes an FAQ section that answers a range of questions, including: How do I know if RFID is being used? Can products that have EPC tags be tracked and identified once I have brought them home? Can personal data/consumer data be linked to the EPC? Can I remove or deactivate the tag if I want to? Is RFID harmful?

In addition, the site features a section enabling visitors to submit their own questions. So far, there have been comments left by visitors but not questions, Thibault says, adding that he expects this to change.

"We think people will be curious about applications they've heard about," he says. "We may also get some that have questions about the technology that haven't been answered on the site. And we wanted a feedback mechanism to make the site more dynamic and more interactive. We will answer the questions, but the questions might also lead us to incorporate new information and content on the site. Down the road, we fully expect consumer reaction to help drive the site."

Since the site went live late last month, visitor traffic has steadily increased. At first, the site received only about 100 hits per day, Thibault says, but that has since increased to 1,000 or more. EPCglobal plans to craft a marketing strategy in early 2008 designed to promote the site and increase awareness, but Thibault says no firm plans have yet been made as to what that strategy will include.

RELATED\_ARTICLES Meanwhile, Jimenez says, several industry sites have included direct links from their Web pages to the Discover RFID site, including [RFID Platform Nederland](#) in the Netherlands and [Informationsforum RFID](#) in Germany, which launched a similar site, [RFIDABC](#), in October 2006 (see [Web Site Teaches German Consumers About RFID](#)). Furthermore, she adds, officials at both the EU and the European Parliament have voiced their support of the new site.

Other RFID proponents are stepping up their efforts to educate consumers as well. Last month, for instance, [AIM Global](#), a worldwide industry association for auto-ID and mobility technologies, kicked off "RFID: Making the World a Better Place." This outreach program is intended to provide relevant, timely examples of consumer-oriented RFID applications, as well as dispel myths about the technology and correct inaccuracies and misperceptions about RFID's use in society (see [RFID News Roundup: AIM Global Kicks Off Campaign to Educate Public About RFID's Benefits](#)).

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