

**At the National Retail Federation's annual trade show, Intermec debuts a new EPC Gen 2 tag interrogator, while Celerant Technology adds RFID to its retail management system.**

By Claire Swedberg

Jan. 14, 2008—Multiple vendors at this week's [National Retail Federation](#) (NRF) convention and expo in New York City are showcasing items and announcing new product offerings using RFID technology.

[Intermec](#) is unveiling its IP30 RFID interrogator in the form of an add-on handle for the company's mobile computers—a next generation to the IP4 portable RFID reader Intermec developed five years ago. According to Chris Johnston, Intermec's product strategist, the new mobile device, which reads and encodes tags compliant with the EPC Gen 2 passive UHF standard, is being piloted by food producers and will be commercially available at the end of March.

The interrogator offers greater flexibility than previous handheld interrogators, Johnston says. It plugs into Intermec CN3 or CK61 mobile computers, allowing it to be used with a variety of functions—either with GPS, wide area network (WAN), 802.11 Wi-Fi and Bluetooth systems in the case of the CN3; or with a bar-code scanner capable of reading bar codes from a distance of 6 inches up to 60 feet, in the case of the CK61.

The IP30 can link to either handheld computer model through a wireless Bluetooth connection or a USB port. The self-contained reader's antenna, smaller than that of its predecessor (the IP4), is linear rather than circular, providing a longer read range. Depending on the tag model, Johnston says, the IP30's read range is 12 or 14 feet. The RFID interrogator also includes five LEDs on its side that indicate whether the wireless function is working; whether the device has a connection with the host, is sending energy to an RFID tag or reading a tag; and whether the battery is charged.

According to Johnston, some popular uses of the system will involve case-to-pallet aggregation (with the bar-code capabilities), as well as produce growers employing GPS technology to locate the position of a read—in a field, for instance. It could also be used to track files or IT equipment, and to locate assets in rugged environments, such as train chassis in a rail yard.

In addition, retail management system provider [Celerant Technology](#) has announced an RFID addition to its Celerant Command Retail system that would allow retailers to utilize RFID tags at the item level for faster point-of-sale (POS) transactions and transfers between stores. Thus far, 215 retailers are using Celerant Command Retail, a management system for retailers that enables point-of-sale, inventory, warehouse-management and data-mining applications written in Java. Those retailers include apparel, convenience and specialty stores.

"RFID technology is our latest offering," says Celerant's marketing and communications manager, Michele Majka. Radio frequency identification, she says, will provide increased speed at checkout and greater security by ensuring that items do not pass through the POS area without being accounted for.

## Intermec Unveils Tag Reader-Writer; Celerant RFID-enables Its Retailer Software

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The technology also eliminates the slower process of scanning individual bar codes. RFID interrogators, she adds, can be used for transferring goods from one store to another—for example, a box of tagged items could be placed on a counter with an RFID interrogator, and all items could be immediately checked into the store's inventory database.

At the point of sale, stores would install an [Alien Technology](#) RFID interrogator under a counter top. The reader would connect to up to four antennas that would capture unique RFID numbers on EPC Gen 2 Alien tags attached to goods placed at the terminal, and transmit the tags' ID numbers to the interrogator, which would then transfer that data to a server using Command Retail software to connect to the retailer's POS system. The system also includes [Zebra Technologies'](#) RFID label printer-encoders to encode and print RFID tags that a store can attach to its products.

The system is available now, Majka says, though pricing has not yet been determined. "It will certainly be an investment," she states, "but the return will outweigh that investment."

Also at the NRF trade show, [Microsoft](#) and [StoreXperience](#) are jointly introducing an information-delivery application new to the United States. StoreXperience's applications enable consumers to use auto-ID technologies such as RFID and bar coding to identify products and access related information. In the application being unveiled by the two companies, consumers can utilize their cell phones' camera to read 2-D bar codes printed on tags attached to products being sold in stores. Doing so would allow consumers to access reviews and ratings, operation manuals, instructional videos, tutorials and other product information.