

Insights from RFID Journal LIVE! 2008

A growing number of end users of RFID technology are clearly ready to move forward with significant projects, and vendors are responding with new products that are easier to deploy.

By Mark Roberti

April 21, 2008—I would not call [RFID Journal LIVE! 2008](#), held last week in Las Vegas, a tipping point or even an inflection point. But I do think it's fair to say radio frequency identification has finally emerged from the pilot stage and is now on the way up the "slope of enlightenment" in [Gartner's](#) hype cycle.

This year's LIVE! event attracted 3,300 attendees, up from about 2,600 last year—that's a 25 percent growth in attendance. And these are real numbers, not the grossly inflated statistics put out by some events companies. I was anticipating 2,800 to 3,000 people, so the increased attendance surprised even me. We had to order extra conference bags and lanyards at the last minute, in fact—but it wasn't entirely unexpected.

We've posted a list of attending end-user companies on our event Web site ([view list](#)). The list is impressive, but it only tells part of the story. Many companies sent five or more people, all of whom showed up to hear from early adopters, get objective information and new insights, and meet the top vendors who could help them deploy applications that deliver real value.

It had been clear to me for the past year that many companies had completed pilots and were ready to roll out the technology. Others—including [Airbus](#), [Procter & Gamble](#) and [Sam's Club](#)—had moved well beyond pilots and even rollouts, developing cohesive enterprise-wide RFID strategies.

Before LIVE!, I e-mailed several end users asking if they would help judge the new "Best in Show" award at the [RFID Journal Awards](#), the winners of which we will announce this week. Some said that while they wanted to help out, they needed to focus on attending the sessions and visiting the booths.

While I wasn't completely surprised by the number of people at RFID Journal LIVE!, virtually all exhibitors and sponsors at the event were—and pleasantly so. They were astounded by the number of attendees, the many end users they met and how serious those end users were about adopting RFID technologies. That's what I kept hearing over and over—from the opening reception to the last day.

Throughout the event, vendor after vendor came up to me saying it was the best they'd ever had, and that they came away with many great leads. In fact, several said they'd already shaken hands on deals for hardware, software or services. This is a marked difference from previous years, where many attendees came simply to learn what RFID was, and engaged vendors primarily to start small pilots.

My guess: By next year, some vendors will be signing contracts for tags, readers and software. That's because the vendor community has responded to requests from their earliest customers to make their products better performing and easier to deploy. Here are just a few examples:

- [Alien Technology](#) unveiled an upgrade to its interrogators, enabling them to capture not only the contents of

RFID tag memory, but also tag velocity and position.

- [Omni-ID](#), [Ferroxtag](#) and others introduced better-performing tags or inlays.
- [Intellex](#) revealed that it has shrunk its battery-assisted tag down small enough to hang on a key chain, making it much easier to attach to smaller assets a company might need to track.
- [Intermec](#) announced its new IP30 handheld RFID reader, which snaps on to existing Intermec handheld computers so customers can RFID-enable existing equipment.
- [Wavetrend](#) has integrated its active RFID solution with GPS and other systems for global visibility.

For more examples, see our [LIVE! 2008 Product Roundup](#), as well as the [news announcements](#) on our event Web site.

RELATED_ARTICLES I expect our fall events to have strong attendance, and for the industry to continue moving steadily along the path it is now on, with more end-user companies reaching the point where they are ready to deploy—and those already there expanding their existing rollouts.

It's taken longer than I expected to get to this stage, but now that it's finally here, it is exciting to see firms benefiting from the technology and achieving what I had always believed RFID could deliver. During the event, one end user told me: "I can't talk about it publicly yet, but we have used RFID to reduce one process from 24 hours to 20 minutes." It's that kind of results, and the ability to learn how to achieve them, that will make future events even better than this year's RFID Journal LIVE!

Mark Roberti is the founder and editor of RFID Journal. If you would like to comment on this article, click on the link below. To read more of Mark's opinions, visit the [RFID Journal Blog](#) or click [here](#).

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