

Tyco Places Big Bet On RFID

The company, which sells Sensormatic EAS systems, will use its marketing muscle and international reach to push RFID technology.

May 2, 2003 - Putting its significant international reach and marketing muscle behind RFID, Tyco International has formed a dedicated team to champion the technology in the retail market. The new Tyco SensorID RFID Solutions Team aims to be a single-source, global partner for retailers and retail merchandise companies looking to deploy large-scale RFID systems.

"There are many small RFID companies doing a superb job of developing RFID technology," Paul Mathans, business development manager of the RFID Solutions Team. "But when looking at RFID deployments, large customers want someone who has experience with tags in that kind of environment."

Tyco plans to leverage its experience in selling and deploying Electronic Article Surveillance (EAS) systems. The company says its Sensormatic EAS systems are the most widely used in the world, with more than 600,000 systems in place and around 4 billion tags sold each year.

Some analysts believe that RFID technology could eventually replace EAS for theft protection, but Tyco is confident that RFID complements existing EAS systems. It has even developed tags that combine both technologies, and it plans to target its EAS customers first.

"We don't see these as competing technologies," Mathans says. "EAS is a large and still growing market. The reason why companies deploy EAS is because it makes economic sense and the same reasoning will apply to RFID."

The new RFID Solutions Team team currently numbers around 50 dedicated engineering and marketing personnel, mostly in the US. But given that more than half of Tyco's EAS revenue comes from outside the US (primarily from Europe), the company expects to have permanent team members in Europe shortly.

Tyco will sell its own technology and partner with other RFID companies to deliver systems customer want. Tyco recently licensed the Agile RFID Reader Design from [ThingMagic](#). Mathans says the multi-protocol, multi-frequency reader will give companies the confidence to invest in large-scale RFID deployments because the readers can be updated as the technology evolves.

Tyco has also has developed a "smart shelf" monitoring systems that alert staff when the shelves need to be restocked. The company is developing its own data integration middleware, but may license the software from a third party.

All of Tyco's RFID systems will be built around the Electronic Product Code technology being developed by the Auto-ID Center, but the company will also deliver other RFID technologies if that's what customers demand. Says Mathans: "We will do whatever our customers ask us for."

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