

IT Resellers, Systems Integrators Still Face RFID-Related Hurdles

A CompTIA survey finds that 75 percent of IT companies say they will or might offer RFID products and services in the next three years—a drop of 14 percentage points.

By Beth Bacheldor

Aug. 14, 2008—Although most IT resellers, systems integrators, distributors and consultants do not currently offer RFID products and services, that's likely to change in the next three years, according to a recent survey conducted by IT industry organization [CompTIA](#).

"The State of RFID—Fourth Annual Member Survey," based on online interviews of 155 CompTIA members regarding their current and future RFID intentions, found that while only 13.5 percent presently offer RFID products and services, that figure is likely to grow to 75 percent within three years. Nearly one-quarter (24.5 percent) of respondents said that although they don't currently offer RFID products and services, they plan to do so within the next three years, and 37.4 percent said they might, if clients express an interest. Only 24.5 percent indicated having no plans to offer RFID products and services.

Although this suggests 75 percent of all respondents will or might offer RFID products and services during the next three years, that total represents a drop compared with the results of previous surveys. In 2007, 84 percent of respondents said they will or might offer RFID products and services over the next three years, while in 2006, that number was 89 percent.

Hardware installation and maintenance continues to remain the top choice in terms of RFID product and service offerings, with 62 percent saying that's what they believe their company's RFID offerings will focus on (89 percent chose that response in 2007). Forty-six percent said they believe their company's RFID offerings will focus on providing consulting services, 43 percent picked training and 40 percent chose software implementations. (Companies were allowed to choose more than one category.)

Among those respondents currently offering RFID products or services, 71 percent said they provide hardware installation or maintenance, 62 percent conduct software implementations and 52 percent offer consulting services.

What have remained the same have been some of the issues respondents face with regard to their RFID plans. As in previous years, respondents reported that hiring employees to work on RFID technology is difficult, as is training and educating staff members on that technology. Using a scale of 1 ("not at all challenging") to 10 ("very challenging"), respondents gave staff hiring a 6.2 average rating, while training and educating workers received a 6.9 average rating. (This was also one of the top three challenges in 2007, 2006 and 2005, with 44 percent, 50 percent and 67 percent of respondents, respectively, rating it as a top challenge.) In previous surveys, respondents were asked to choose their top challenges from among several options, though they did not rate them.

This year, 81 percent said they believe there is an insufficient "pool of talent" in RFID technology from which to hire, compared with 69 percent who felt that way in 2007, 75 percent in 2006 and 80 percent in 2005. And 79 percent of respondents claimed the lack of individuals skilled in RFID technology will impact the adoption of RFID technology.

Equally challenging is winning clients and customers for RFID solutions (a 6.6 average rating this year, and one of the top three challenges in the past three years). A little more than half (54 percent) of this year's respondents indicated their clients have not implemented RFID solutions—a figure that dropped several points from the survey one year ago, when that number was at 66 percent. Thirty-six percent said that fewer than 20 percent of their clients have implemented RFID solutions.

Among those respondents who currently offer RFID products and services, 65 percent have implemented one or more RFID pilot projects for themselves or a client company, while 35 percent have implemented one or more RFID production systems for clients or themselves.

RELATED_ARTICLES The respondents rated several other challenges as well. Gaining clients and customers for RFID solutions received a 6.6 average rating. (This was another top-three challenge in 2007, 2006 and 2005, with 46 percent, 59 percent and 56 percent of respondents, respectively, rating it as a top challenge.) Gaining vendor support for offering RFID technology received a 5.7 average rating, and overcoming initial RFID implementation hurdles scored a 6.5 average rating. (This was a third top-three challenge in 2007, 2006 and 2005, with 43 percent, 60 percent and 72 percent of respondents, respectively, rating it as a top challenge.) Keeping costs down earned a 6.9 average rating, with proving ROI garnering an average rating of 6.7.

The majority (74.8 percent) of this year's respondents come from North America, while Europe (7.7 percent), Asia Pacific (7.1 percent) and the Middle East or Africa (7.1 percent) are nearly equally split. About 3 percent hail from Latin America. As a group, the respondents provide the entire gamut of IT services and products, serving a variety of industries, including communications, health care, retail, manufacturing, government and more.

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