

Infosys Enters RFID Market

Global IT consulting company announces new services to help companies deploy RFID technology economically and quickly.

By Jonathan Collins

Dec. 31, 2003—Global information technology consulting and software services company Infosys Technologies has announced its entry into the RFID market, launching services that range from analyzing the potential consequences and payback of an RFID deployment to overseeing initial pilots and final deployment. The company will also provide low-cost services to develop the custom software its clients will need to link their RFID networks to existing enterprise systems.

Based in Bangalore, India, Infosys says it began looking at moving into the RFID consulting and development field in March 2003. Through consultation with RFID vendors and potential retail customers, Infosys developed a framework to help its clients quickly examine the potential impact and business value of RFID investments. This framework comprises seven layers that need to be addressed when developing RFID applications: business processes, applications, integration, event management, product directory services, networks and, at the bottom, the RFID equipment that constitutes the data-collection layer.

According to Infosys, its framework will provide the basis for RFID deployments across a wide range of industry verticals. “Our seven-layer reference architecture provides a hierarchical methodology for implementing RFID within an enterprise independent of whatever industry vertical that enterprise may be in,” says Shashi Shekhar, principle architect of RFID at Infosys. While each deployment will require custom software development, the framework will nevertheless speed up the design and deployment of RFID technology for its customers.

Infosys divides its RFID offering into three phases. In the “discovery phase,” the Infosys consultancy team works with a client to define a roadmap for RFID adoption. During the second pilot phase, which generally lasts between three and four months, the Infosys application development team works with a client on a small, initial RFID installation. The third phase is the final deployment of the RFID network. According to the company, the price for this phased approach can range between \$200,000 and \$1,000,000, depending on the size and nature of the deployment.

Infosys will look to partner with hardware integration vendors to manage the deployment of RFID hardware. Most of Infosys’s clients, the company says, are already partnering with RF data collection vendors that Infosys expects will be players in managing RFID as well. Infosys will deploy the necessary software.

With more than 19,000 employees worldwide, Infosys specializes in creating custom software using computer programmers living in India. Because the amount of software development required to link RFID networks to enterprise systems is significant, developing that software offshore can dramatically cut costs, according to Infosys. “Typically in non-RFID applications, using offshore programming saves between 20 and 30 percent over programming in the U.S.,” says Shekhar. Such as savings will provide its customers with a lower total cost of ownership for RFID network deployments, he says.

The company says it expects logistics, retail and consumer packaged goods and pharmaceuticals companies to all be interested in its RFID solution. It already sees 15 percent of its revenues coming from retail and CPG businesses and counts U.S. retailers JC Penny and Nordstrom among its existing customers.

The company says that a number of potential RFID customers have already attended RFID workshops Infosys has held during the past six months, and that it has one pilot project already underway. In addition, in December, Infosys underlined its commitment to its involvement in RFID by becoming a member of the EPCglobal industry-standards body.

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