

# VeriSign to Run EPC Directory

EPCglobal has awarded the company a contract to manage the system for looking up information related to Electronic Product Codes.

Jan. 13, 2004—[EPCglobal](#), the organization that is commercializing Electronic Product Code technology, has awarded Internet and telecommunications infrastructure services provider [VeriSign](#) a contract to manage the directory for looking up EPC numbers on the Internet.

VeriSign manages the core Domain Name Service (DNS) directory that allows Internet users to look up the Internet Protocol address for Web sites that end with .com. It was chosen because it has the infrastructure needed to handle the vast number of EPC look-ups. Today, VeriSign handles 10 billion DNS look-ups per day. Jon Brendsel, director of products for the Naming and Directory Services division at Mountain View, Calif.-based VeriSign, says the company's infrastructure can handle 100 billion look-ups today.

"A lot of people have talked about the EPC Network as if it were a fanciful concept that was developed by MIT and the Auto-ID Center," says Brendsel. "We're starting to drive home the fact that it isn't that fanciful. It's based on technology that's here today, and it will be available as of today."

Under the EPC Network system, each company will have a server running its own Object Name Service (ONS). Like DNS, which points Web browsers to the server where they can download the Web site for any particular Web address, ONS will point computers looking up EPC numbers to information stored on something called EPC Information Services—servers that store information about products. Companies may maintain their own EPC Information Services or subcontract it out, but it will use a distributed architecture, with information about products in more than one secure database on the Web.

Under the deal with EPCglobal, VeriSign will manage the EPC Network's root directory: The system that points computers to each company's ONS. VeriSign has already set up the infrastructure at six sites around the world. These are servers that maintain a registry of ONS servers. Computers will access the registry via the Internet, and if one registry goes down temporarily, a computer requesting information about an EPC number will automatically be directed to another registry site, guaranteeing 100 percent up time.

"This is a major step forward that gives momentum to the development of the EPC Network," says Jack Grasso, a spokesperson for EPCglobal. "There was a rigorous process for choosing the company to provide the service. We think this will give subscribers more reason to get actively involved in the development of the network."

One question some observers have had is whether the EPC Network will be adopted or whether existing data synchronization services—such as UCCnet and Transor—might provide the look-up services for EPC numbers. Wal-Mart has said that, for now, it will use UCCnet's product registry and share data with suppliers via Wal-Mart's own extranet, called Retail Link.

EPCglobal's Grasso and VeriSign's Brendsel sees the EPC Network and UCCnet as complementary. "I think it's important to look at them separately," says Grasso. "As we learn more about the deployment of EPC technology, needs are going to vary, the amount of data will be orders of magnitude different than we're used

to, so I think to allow the EPC Network to evolve as it needs to."

Brendsel says the two serve different functions. UCCnet is primarily a product catalog that provides product information to ensure that suppliers and retailers are sharing the same information related to a single class of product. It is accessed via the Internet and could be one source of data that the ONS points to on the EPC Network. But he says that the UCCnet's centralized system would be overwhelmed if you had to refer to it every time you scanned an EPC tag.

VeriSign also announced the availability of managed services. It will host ONS servers for customers and guarantee 100 percent availability. It will also host EPC Information Services. Companies will be able to establish rules for allowing partners to access information on the service, and then VeriSign will control access and deliver information to authorized parties. VeriSign will provide these services, which were announced back in September, to customers for a fee. For more information, see [/article/view/557/1/1/ The EPC Network Gets Real](#)>.

Copyright ©2005 RFID Journal, Inc. All Rights Reserved