

SAP Launches RFID Package

The package of applications and middleware is aimed at helping companies take advantage of RFID data.

Jan. 15, 2004—SAP, the German enterprise resource planning software provider, unveiled a packaged RFID solution that includes a software event management application module, middleware and messaging software. The aim is to provide its customers with all the elements needed to take advantage of data provided by RFID readers.

The core of the system is SAP's Auto-ID Infrastructure, a middleware layer that has been developed over the past two years by SAP corporate research in conjunction with several of the company's product and industry teams. The Auto-ID Infrastructure has an underlying network messaging layer that routes data from readers to applications.

The Auto-ID Infrastructure adds a layer of intelligence between the reader and the application. It collects, analyzes and manages high volumes of real-time information from tagged items, environmental sensors and real-time locating systems (see SAP Takes RFID into the Enterprise). The data can then be routed to an inventory management or warehouse management application or to a data warehouse.

"The Auto-ID Infrastructure has a data repository that describes the physical world around it, so the context [for RFID transactions or events] is known," says Christian Koch, SAP's marketing manager for consumer products and retail. "When RFID data comes in, you know where it is coming from, and it can trigger the appropriate activities," such as sending an advance shipping notice.

The Auto-ID Infrastructure is built on SAP's Web Application Server, which is part of the company's NetWeaver integration and application platform. The Java-based RFID package also includes SAP Event Management (a modular component of mySAP Supply Chain Management) and SAP Enterprise Portal, a component of NetWeaver.

The initial focus of the application is on automating common warehouse tasks, including sending advance shipping notices, receiving of goods and managing exceptions based on RFID data. The Auto-ID Infrastructure features a rules engine that the end user can configure. So, for instance, the system can be set up to alert a manager when warehouse inventory needs to be replenished based on how many pallets have been shipped.

NetWeaver enables companies to connect RFID readers to the Auto-ID Infrastructure and the Auto-ID Infrastructure to enterprise applications, including those sold by SAP's competitors. The package is currently available only to pilot customers, but Koch says it will be more widely available to customers in mid-2004.

The Auto-ID Infrastructure can be integrated with Auto-ID connectors to SAP R/3, version 4.6c or higher, and mySAP ERP. Auto-ID connectors are APIs or software used to translate data from one format to another as a way of integrating two different software systems. Koch says SAP and its consulting and technology partners, including IBM, will help customers deploy customized RFID systems. SAP and its partners will design a complete RFID system, including the hardware and software infrastructure needed. They will also deploy the

software infrastructure and handle the integration of the software with data from the readers.

SAP has been ahead of other ERP vendors in working on large-scale RFID pilots, in part because it has a strong customer base in the retail, consumer packaged goods and pharmaceutical industries. The most prominent example is the Metro Future Store Initiative. SAP, Intel, IBM and other technology partners worked together to deploy RFID systems at a Metro store in Rheinberg, Germany (see [Metro Readies RFID Rollout](#)).

Koch says SAP is working with customers to try to provide the functionality they need as they deploy RFID systems. "Right now it makes sense to focus on inbound and outbound warehouse activities," he says. "When you scale up the deployment and have more and more tagged items, it makes to sense to use RFID readers at storage locations and for us to enhance our software to take advantage of that. We're fully committed to RFID because it is a way to drive standards throughout the retail and CPG industries."

[RFID Journal Home](#)

Copyright ©2005 RFID Journal, Inc. All Rights Reserved