

NCR Offers In-Store RFID Service

The company aims to help retailers begin analyzing and planning in-store applications today.

Jan. 16, 2004—NCR, the maker of automatic teller machines and point-of-sales terminals, announced at the National Retail Federation Convention & Expo in New York City that it's offering a broad portfolio of consulting and support services designed to help retailers use RFID technology in their stores.

The company's RFID Store Services include:

- RFID Opportunity Assessment: An examination of the business case for the in-store implementation of RFID.
- RFID Impact Assessment: A study of how RFID will impact budgets, IT infrastructure, culture and other areas.
- RFID Infrastructure Consulting and Integration: Assistance in building an IT infrastructure and linking it to existing back-end systems.
- RFID Staging, Deployment, Maintenance: Complete on-site deployment and support of an RFID rollout.

Most retailers are focused on deploying RFID in their supply chain and are still a couple of years away from using the technology on individual items in their stores. Most other services companies have also focused their offerings on the supply chain. "It's early," says Judy Dobson, a managing partner in NCR's retail solutions division. "But it's not too early."

Dobson says that NCR has identified 50 potential ways in which RFID can be used in a store to save money or improve customer service. The company will work with its customers to identify a few key applications where RFID can provide the most benefit for a particular retailer. She says they would likely find one core application and several smaller applications that would deliver a return on investment.

NCR would then analyze how in-store deployment of the technology would affect everything from the IT infrastructure to business processes. The purpose is to assess all the potential business risks, and then create an "impact simulation" model that is designed to help retailers quantify the costs and benefits of potential RFID projects.

Infrastructure consulting covers the planning and design of a RFID system, testing of RFID readers, and installation and certification of the system. For the actual integration of the system with a retailer's back-end applications and data, NCR will work with best-of-breed suppliers or hardware and software vendors chosen by the retail customer.

Dobson says that it's expected that most retailers will want to test and deploy Electronic Product Code technology, but she didn't rule out that some retailers may need or want to use a proprietary system in a niche application.