

i2 Joins RFID Middleware Makers

One of the world's leading providers of supply chain management applications has launched a program to help integrate its software with RFID systems.

By Jonathan Collins

Feb. 24, 2004—[i2 Technologies](#) is partnering with a number of RFID middleware and enterprise applications vendors so that its supply chain management applications can be linked to RFID networks. i2 has more than 1,000 customers, including a number of the world's biggest companies.

According to i2, [IBM](#), [Sun Microsystems](#), data integration and business intelligence software developer [Informatica](#), supply chain management software maker [GlobeRanger](#) and Web services integration specialist [webMethods](#) have already signed on as partners. The company adds that it is also in discussion with other vendors including HP, Verisign and RFID middleware companies ConnecTerra, OATSystems and Shipcom Wireless about their interest in joining the program.

"We expect most of our partners to showcase their RFID solutions integrating with i2 products by the end of April," says Razat Gaurav, a solution executive at i2, which is based in Dallas.

The program allows RFID middleware vendors to certify that their software works with i2 applications, thereby enabling the vendors to offer a packaged solution targeting i2 customers around the world. The company believes that the combination of RFID with its applications will turn data collected by RFID into more meaningful intelligence that enables effective decision making and increases the value of RFID deployments. In addition, the partnership program will identify relevant supply chain management work flow and processes that can benefit from RFID and also will identify specific RFID events and data that can benefit supply chain management solutions.

The latest version of i2's central Supply Chain Operating Services, which forms the infrastructure foundation for all of the company's i2 applications, supports standardized Web service interfaces (a standardized set of application programming interfaces based in Internet technology) between i2 and third-party software. This will help i2's partners to integrate their software with its systems, according to the company.

"Web services have made this all so much easier," Gaurav says.

By helping its vendor partners develop hardware and software that can work with its applications, i2 says, its customers will be able to use RFID technology to provide not only improved real-time visibility of inventory, orders and shipments, but also the intelligence to respond in real time to events. Two of i2's current products will play a direct role in achieving those goals: i2's Master Data Management (MDM) and Performance Management modules and its Supply Chain Event Manager (SCEM).

The MDM and Performance Management products are set up to process raw data into useful, timely information that allows companies to make proactive decisions. SCEM makes it possible to proactively manage exceptions in a company's supply chain operations. RFID readers, through RFID-sensing middleware developed by third-party vendors through the partnership program, would feed SCEM with accurate and

up-to-date information, leading to improved supply chain efficiency.

The company maintains that its RFID partner program is similar to other programs that have provided its applications with connectivity to other types of technology, such as point-of-sale and bar code systems. However, financial terms of the program have not been released.

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