

# ODIN Lab Focuses on Wal-Mart

Systems integrator ODIN Technologies opens a new warehouse testing facility to try out solutions in a Wal-Mart-type environment.

By Jennifer Maselli

March 8, 2004—RFID systems integrator ODIN Technologies has expanded its facilities and services with the addition of a 3,000-square-foot warehouse testing facility in Dulles, Va.

While ODIN's original lab in Reston has focused on testing various readers, tags and architectures, the new facility will concentrate on testing how tags and readers perform when the tags are attached to specific products sold by its clients. "We're focusing this facility on Wal-Mart's top suppliers," says Patrick Sweeney, CEO for ODIN Technologies, who explains that companies are asking ODIN to determine whether chosen technologies will work within the requirements of Wal-Mart and Department of Defense mandates.

"We've spent a lot of time understanding the Wal-Mart mandate, and the better you know the mandate, the more easily you can re-create it and ensure clients will meet its demands," says Sweeney. For example, Sweeney explains, the facility will test a customer's products to ensure that tags can be read while on a conveyor moving at the mandated speed of 600 feet per minute, regardless of the orientation of the product or the placement of the tag.

The new test center competes with a number of other testing facilities that have opened up across the country within the past year. In November, computer hardware and software maker Sun Microsystems, systems integrator Xterprise, and supply chain software provider RedPrairie were among the companies to open up test labs. In February, systems integrators SIS Technologies, in Houston, and RSI ID Technologies, in Chula Vista, Calif., each announced they had opened RFID test centers.

A distinguishing characteristic of ODIN's new facility, says Sweeney, is the fact that the company's executives are able to bring a decade's worth of experience to the testing environment. ODIN's Reston lab has been operating for about a year, the CEO says, claiming that that's longer than many RFID startup companies have been around. The original facility in Reston will continue to conduct experiments to evaluate various tags and readers, while the warehouse lab will focus solely on client deployments.

Although the Reston facility was based on an Auto-ID Center lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Reston facility, as well as the one in Dulles, are able to provide a greater variety of services than the MIT lab ever could, according to Sweeney.

"Due to budgetary constraints, the Auto-ID Center tested tags with one specific reader, but we were able to go out and get multiple readers and then set them up for the same tests," says Sweeney. "The result is we're able to get the same conditions for each reader to come up with a very scientific method to determine the best performing solutions."

ODIN plans to announce a new software application at *RFID Journal's* executive conference held on Mar. 29 to 31 in Chicago. The new product, which is based on something developed for an RFID system it deployed

for the federal government, will make implementing RFID in warehouse environments much easier, according to the company.

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