

WebMethods Launches Starter Kit

The integration middleware company is offering its software and services in an all-inclusive package.

March 9, 2004—WebMethods, a Fairfax, Va.-based provider of integration middleware, has introduced its RFID Starter Pack, which includes software and services designed to help companies jump-start an RFID project.

The Starter Pack includes webMethods Integration Server (a component of its flagship Integration Platform); webMethods Modeler, a graphical application for modeling how data will flow from RFID readers to enterprise applications and databases; and a pilot kit that includes prebuilt data models based on specific business processes. For instance, the kit includes a model for scanning tags at receiving and transferring the data to inventory management and other applications.

The Starter Kit includes a Java Database Connector (JDBC) adapter for linking RFID readers to databases; one software adapter for linking RFID data to an enterprise resource planning (ERP) application or a warehouse management system; and 40 hours of webMethods professional services.

The Integration Platform takes data either directly from an RFID reader or from Savant software developed by the Auto-ID Center to manage Electronic Product Code (EPC) networks. It can convert the data into different formats and then pass it on to various applications and/or a database. The pilot kit allows end users to configure the flow of the data from the Integration Platform to a database and/or an enterprise application.

"This gives companies a broad platform to take the raw RFID data from readers and bring it all the way up into the enterprise application layer so they can exploit the data," says Tom Roberts, vice president of industry solutions at webMethods.

Many companies launching a pilot or an initial rollout are struggling to deal with how to turn raw RFID data into information that can be used to cut costs or improve efficiencies. A number of companies are marketing products aimed at this market, including startups OATSystems and GlobeRanger and German ERP software giant SAP.

WebMethods is somewhat late to the game, but Roberts says the company's "service" architecture gives it an advantage. In a service architecture, he says, integration software components are "loosely coupled" and can be changed without requiring changes to be made throughout the system.

"That means companies can maintain the integration layer and upgrade it over time without burning a hole in their pocket," he says, because they won't have to make changes throughout the entire system. Using a service architecture, he adds, "also means you can do integration simultaneously across many locations in a decentralized way and ensure that the pieces will fit together seamlessly."

The Starter Pack, which is available immediately, costs \$27,500. For customers that already own webMethods Integration Server, the company will provide 40 hours of professional services around implementing an RFID pilot for \$7,000.

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