

# Software Controls RFID Network

ProdexNet's new management and reporting application enables complete real-time administration and visibility of all readers in an RFID network.

By Jonathan Collins

Apr. 15, 2004—Network management software provider [ProdexNet](#) has developed an RFID version of its core NetGather application to provide a real-time management and reporting system for enterprise RFID networks. The new product—dubbed NetGather for RFID—delivers a centralized management console that provides full control and visibility of all readers in an RFID network.

In 2001, ProdexNet debuted its first integrated IT reporting solution, NetGather, which was designed to draw operational data from a company's IT infrastructure to provide reports and alerts so that a company could better understand and interpret how that infrastructure was impacting its core business. Developing a version for RFID implementations required ProdexNet to add a new central console as well as ensure that the new software could pull data from a range of applications and hardware in real-time.

According to the company, creating a version of its IT infrastructure management software for RFID networks was a logical step. "RFID networks will be managed by IT people who already want to manage that network the same way they manage their IT infrastructure," says Sujatha Bodapati, president and founder of ProdexNet, which is based in Saratoga, Calif.

Such business service management systems have become the big buzz in IT over the past few years, according to Bodapati who is confident that as RFID deployments grow from pilots to company-wide implementations, there will be an increasing need to manage and understand RFID networks and the impact they have on business processes. "A lot of companies in pilot stage are already seeing reader errors flagged but don't know exactly where that reader is or what it is doing," says Bodapati.

NetGather for RFID enables the management of the RFID readers, middleware and any business processes and activities directly related to readers and tags. Displayed in the form of a central console or dashboard on a computer monitor, the NetGather for RFID application provides a single high-level view of the entire network but can also be used to drill down to show specific real-time data by market region, warehouse, store, distribution center, and other locations, even down to individual reader performance and configuration.

The software also enables alerts and includes analysis and reporting tools to automatically create usable information from events detected in the RFID network. "Reports can be generated to show, for example, the most active or least active readers or for other customer-determined SLAs [service level agreements]," says Bodapati.

As the product evolves, the company says, it will eventually deliver end-to-end management of the entire RFID infrastructure, which will also include the management of the back-end applications and any other hardware devices that might be part of this infrastructure.

NetGather for RFID connects to readers through [Sun Microsystems'](#) RFID Event Manager. ProdexNet turned

to as a way to avoid having to develop its own software interfaces for each reader manufacturers specifications. "That has helped us get to market far more quickly," says Bodapati.

Around nine months ago, ProdexNet began to develop on NetGather for RFID and to work with Sun to enable it to connect to Sun's RFID Event Manager. Currently, NetGather for RFID is available only in a beta version but is set to ship commercially later this quarter.

ProdexNet maintains that the application may not always be tied to Sun's software. "We could connect to another middleware solution without much problem or connect directly to the readers. We will be led by our customers needs," says Bodapati.

The company says it expects to sell its NetGather for RFID application through Sun as well as through systems integrators and directly to customers as well. Pricing information is not yet available.

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