

RFID News Roundup

Study says Europe is embracing RFID; packaged solution for Wal-Mart drug suppliers; Cathexis adds SAP integration; new OS for smart card chips; Digital ID conference in October.

Apr. 30, 2004—The following are news announcements made during the week of Apr. 26.

Study Says Europe Is Embracing RFID

A new study suggests that RFID is on the cusp of widespread adoption in Europe. Conducted by LogicaCMG, a Dutch IT consulting and services company, in partnership with ECR Germany, a group promoting efficiency in the supply chain, and EAN Netherlands, a nonprofit chapter of EAN International, the study says that half of the companies interviewed from October 2003 to April 2004 in Belgium, Ireland, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom said they are planning to deploy RFID pilot projects throughout 2004. LogicaCMG says "the vast majority" of companies will start deploying RFID systems within the next three years. Most companies are planning to track returnable containers. Item-level tracking is still several years away.

Packaged Solution for Wal-Mart Drug Suppliers

R4 Global Services, a San Francisco technology services provider, has introduced a hardware and software bundle aimed at helping pharmaceutical manufacturers meet Wal-Mart's mandate for putting RFID tags on bulk shipments of DEA Schedule II drugs, which are highly regulated prescription narcotics such as Ritalin and morphine. The R4 Accelerate Solution includes EPC tags from Alien Technology or Matrics, a PC controller, RFID reader, desktop label printer/RFID encoder from either Printronix or Zebra, middleware from MARC Global or Manhattan Associates and implementation services from R4. The services include the development of a short-term compliance strategy, testing of tagged product, software and hardware integration, and system configuration and deployment. R4 says the package can help manufacturers meet Schedule II compliance requirements in eight weeks or less.

Cathexis Adds SAP Integration

Cathexis Innovations, a Canadian provider of asset management software, has announced that it will incorporate NLINK integration technology from Junot Systems, a Houston-based company that offers integration software, to enable its customers to more quickly integrate RFID systems with SAP R/3 enterprise resource planning (ERP) software. Cathexis' RFID Engine is a suite of software tools that lets companies develop customized RFID applications. NLINK is set of prebuilt software connectors that make it easier to integrate applications with SAP ERP systems. The integration of the two products is expected to be completed within two months.

New OS for Smart Card Chips

ASK, a French manufacturer of contactless smart cards, tickets and RFID smart labels, has introduced an embedded operating system for smart cards compliant with the ISO7816 and ISO14443 A/B standards. ASK will embed its C.carte operating system in microchips from Atmel, Philips Semiconductors and STMicroelectronics. The C.Carte cards can store 0.5 Kbytes to 16 Kbytes of data and execute security commands and deduct funds stored on the card. ASK will market the cards, which are available immediately, to mass transit operators. Prices range from 2 to 5 euros (US\$2.39 to \$5.97) per card.

Digital ID Conference in October

Digital ID World, a media company focused on issues surrounding the creation, authorization and management of digital identities, has announced that it will hold its third annual conference in Denver from Oct. 25 to Oct. 28. Among the featured speakers are Stratton Sclavos, CEO of VeriSign; Art Coviello, CEO of RSA Security; and Tony Scott, CTO of General Motors' Information Systems & Services division. Digital identification is an important but often overlooked element of deploying an RFID system. Readers must be identified and authorized to ensure the integrity of data, and databases with information associated with product serial numbers will have to have a complex set of systems to identify and authorize different sets of users.

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