

OATSystems Releases Version 3.0

The RFID middleware maker adds new features to its EPC-IS Edge Server 3.0 product for managing readers on an RFID network.

By Jonathan Collins

May 25, 2004—Building on its early work with the Auto-ID Center in developing software to manage EPC networks, RFID middleware specialist [OATSystems](#) has launched a version 3.0 of EPC-IS Edge Server. The Edge Server 3.0 software enables the management of dozens of readers on an RFID network and can link that network with enterprise applications.

“The real challenge now is to see our baby graduate and become an adult. The Auto-ID Center’s vision is starting to be implemented, and, for me, OATSystems technology stands out,” says Sanjay Sarma, OATSystems’ newly appointed CTO. Sarma was the Auto-ID Center’s chairman of research before joining OATSystems’ board in November.

Based in Watertown, Mass., OAT says its software is deployed by around 25 customers, including three of the eight Wal-Mart suppliers that have already begun to tag pallet and case shipments to Wal-Mart’s distribution center in Dallas (see [Wal-Mart Begins RFID Rollout](#)). Among the three is Hewlett-Packard, which, according to OAT, is using the EPC-IS Edge Server software to manage the tagging of printer cartridges at its manufacturing site in Chester, Va. HP is currently shipping tagged products to Wal-Mart, but only from a separate plant in Memphis (see [HP Tags Printers, Scanners](#)). OAT also counts CPG manufacturer Gillette, retailer Target and the Department of Defense among its customers.

OAT says some of those customers have already tested EPC-IS Edge Server 3.0. Available immediately, EPC-IS Edge Server 3.0 contains a number of new features and improvements, including a new Web-based configurable user interface and management capabilities, according to OAT, as well as a new scheduling algorithm to coordinate the operation of each reader in a network to avoid interference. The company says the software has already been tested and proven in a situation with 100 readers located in the same building.

“When you have 100 readers and several 100 antennas within a single four-walled environment, reader interference will drive read rates down unless you schedule reading with some operational logic,” says Sarma.

Using XML APIs operating on Sun Microsystems’s Java or Microsoft’s .NET platform, Edge Server connects RFID readers to enterprise applications such as enterprise resource planning (ERP), warehouse management system (WMS) and legacy software and enables collected data to be managed and distributed across an enterprise and its supply chain.

According to the OAT, many companies using Edge Server have already implemented so-called “slap and ship” RFID capabilities to meet their customer mandates but are now looking to integrate their RFID network more closely to their existing business operating systems. OATSystems believes that the Edge Server’s ability to pass RFID-derived data to a range of enterprise applications can help its customers meet those goals.

“Our customer looked at compliance first, but now they are looking to expand those deployments and get more value from that investment by integrating that RFID network into their operations, and they will do that

over the next six to nine months,” says Sarma.

OAT launched its first version of EPC-IS Edge Server in November 2002, and a second version was released in June 2003. The company maintains that its existing customers can upgrade to the latest version of the software, and an additional upgrade will follow the completion of the EPCgroup’s planned EPC Information Services (EPC-IS) standard, which is intended to create a standard interface for accessing information in the EPC Network across the supply chain.

“Our product right now anticipates by great lengths much of the standards activities,” says Sarma, who estimates that a completed EPC-IS standard is at least six months away.

Pricing for the software is dependent on the scale of each company’s EPC network deployment, but the company says that for previous versions, it has charged customers from \$25,000 to \$100,000 per site. The company says that during the next few weeks, it will announce sales partnerships with both WMS providers and systems integrators.

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