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EPC Finds a Beachhead in the Supply Chain

Each time we produce RFID Journal LIVE!, our annual conference and exhibition, the event is different. The first year was small and mostly attended by those curious about RFID. The next year, there was a sense of enthusiasm, a feeling that attendees were part of a pioneering effort to transform the

way companies do business. That enthusiasm faded in 2005, as companies found the benefits would be harder to achieve than anticipated. Last year, there was a practical focus on internal applications of RFID that could drive benefits. That continued strongly this year, though companies were also really excited about using RFID—in particular, Electronic Product Code (EPC) technologies—to achieve benefits among business partners.

Rollin Ford, Wal-Mart's CIO, discussed Wal-Mart's commitment to RFID because it is reducing out-of-stocks. Rear Admiral Mark Harnitck, supply corps. director for the U.S. Dept. of Defense's Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM), said the DOD is committed to rolling out RFID globally because it is seeing benefits from the many projects going on across the DOD's operations.



T3Ci, a leading provider of software for analyzing EPC data, hosted a reception celebrating the fact that the company has analyzed more than a billion tag reads for customers. Jonathan Golovin, the company's chairman, CEO and co-founder, explained how customers are now able to act on RFID data to reduce out-of-stocks and improve the management of in-store promotions.

Two other software vendors, TrueDemand and OATSystems, also made presentations about how they can help end users improve the replenishment and execution of in-store promotions. Our cover story in the current issue of *RFID Journal* magazine chronicles, in detail, how Kimberly-Clark is using OAT's software to analyze EPC data from Wal-Mart to make sure

promotional displays are in the stores when the promotions are being advertised (see Kimberly-Clark Gets an Early Win). Executing promotions properly can significantly improve sales, benefiting both manufacturers and retailers.

Promotions management represents a beachhead for EPC in the supply chain. I've said all along that the use of EPC in the supply chain wouldn't be able to ramp up until several things happened:

- The creation of standards allowing tags to be read anywhere in the global supply chain and companies to share the data securely.
- Companies figured out how to read tags on products consistently.
- Companies learned where they can achieve short-term wins.
- Companies determined how to use EPC data in new applications or integrate EPC data with existing applications so they can act on data.
- Companies changed their business processes to act on RFID data and achieve the promised benefits.