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# EPCglobal Offers RFID Consulting Services, Lowers Fees

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May 5, 2009—EPCglobal US has formalized the assistance it

offers companies interested in using RFID into packaged consulting services. The not-for-profit RFID standards and technology developer, which maintains the Electronic Product Code (EPC) system, now offers one- and two-day on-site visits by members of its staff to help companies identify how they can use RFID, evaluate their readiness to use RFID at the pallet, case and item levels, and assess their ability to integrate RFID-based standards and business processes with their information systems. The services are available to any organization – they are not only offered to EPCglobal members.

“We’ve been doing these services quietly, on a company-by-company basis, for several years,” Sue Hutchinson, director of product management at EPCglobal US told RFID Update. “Now we’ve packaged them into a kind of ‘quick-start’ program for companies who are just getting started.”

The one-day program concentrates on helping organizations understand RFID technology and build an adoption roadmap. The two-day service adds a readiness analysis for integrating EPC-standard RFID technology into existing IT systems and business processes.

Because EPCglobal maintains the Electronic Product Code (EPC) system and assigns EPC numbers, it comes into contact with all companies who need EPC numbers to meet customer tagging requirements or to participate in Gen2 and other EPCglobal standards-based systems. The experience has given EPCglobal strong insight into the types of guidance organizations need.

“We get a full range of questions, but they tend to depend on company type,” Hutchinson said. “Companies who are beginners and were drawn in to RFID by request from a trading partner can be characterized as: ‘They don’t know what they don’t know.’ Those who have considered RFID for awhile tend to ask ‘How can we plan for integration?’”

EPCglobal US announced the new services last week during the

RFID Journal LIVE! exhibition and conference in Orlando (see RFID Update's overview of the event here and a recap of announcements made there here and here). The new services were well received there by end-user organizations and solution providers alike, despite the potential for competition between EPCglobal and professional consulting and integration firms, according to Hutchinson. She said the new services, which are centered on EPCglobal's expertise and focus on EPC standards, will complement those offered by for-profit companies.

"We have a number of very capable solution providers within the EPCglobal community. They're more specialists in bringing all the technologies together," Hutchinson said. "Solution providers like us because we bring them more educated prospects. Organizations who work with EPCglobal come to the solution provider community better prepared to discuss their requirements."

EPCglobal also lowered the fees it charges companies to subscribe to the EPC system and receive Electronic Product Code numbers. It also changed its membership model. Membership fees are now on a sliding scale based on organizational revenues, starting at \$300 annually for organizations with revenues of \$100,000 or less. The new fee structure, combined with the new service offerings, were designed to make the EPC system and expertise more accessible.

"We're lowering the barriers to EPC-based RFID adoption today," EPCglobal US vice president and general manager John Seaner said in the announcement. "Many companies have proven that EPC-enabled RFID delivers significant benefits to the top line, with demonstrable return on investment. For the companies that want to do it but haven't been able to get started, we just made it a lot easier."



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