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# **EPCglobal    Readies    EPCIS Certification Program**

Now that the Electronic Product Code Information Services (EPCIS) is a bona fide industry standard, EPCglobal is readying a certification program to validate EPCIS products. The program is expected to be available sometime in mid-July.

The certification program will be run by MET Laboratories in Baltimore, and open to companies wishing to test their products' compliance with the specification, which EPCglobal's board ratified on April 16 (see EPCglobal Ratifies EPCIS Standard). A number of companies plan to put their software through the certification process once it's available, including GlobeRanger, IBM and SAP.

EPCIS serves as a communications mechanism between applications and data repositories, enabling companies to effectively exchange and query data within their own RFID processes, and with those of its partners. In addition, the protocol automates the exchange of RFID data, because it allows for machine-to-machine communications, providing a standard structure for defining EPC events so the machines understand each other while exchanging the data. Without the standard, companies would have to develop their own mechanisms for exchanging and querying data with each individual trading partner, and EPC data objects might be described in different, potentially incompatible, ways.

EPCglobal's Software Action Group, under which the EPCIS working group falls, has already submitted conformance requirements to MET Laboratories for the certification program, says Craig Asher, cochair of the action group and chief architect with IBM's software group. Asher says third-party labs are typically used for standards-certification programs to prevent any single party from having undue influence over the process.

According to Ted Osinski, MET Laboratories' director of RFID programs, the lab is developing a set of test cases that will be used to check a product's conformance to the standard. MET plans to submit beta test cases to the Software Action Group for review and validation by the last week of June. Once the reviews are complete and the test cases are cleared, he says, the certification process will begin, likely sometime in mid-July.

The certification process, Asher notes, will check to see if the standard's two fundamental interfaces—capture and query—perform as expected. “One of the issues to obtain certification is the software will have to capture EPC standard events correctly,” he explains. “Another would be that [the software] correctly responds to queries that are enabled in the query interface.”

IBM already offers a commercially available EPCIS product, the WebSphere RFID Information Center, launched in December 2006 (see [IBM Launches Software for Sharing RFID Data](#)). Based on the EPCIS candidate standard, the software is designed to facilitate the exchange of RFID data among trading partners, government agencies and other entities.

Asher says IBM will submit its software to the certification program as soon as the program is ready. He adds that the software's development has been closely aligned with the EPCIS standard's development, and has already been vetted in several pilots with AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health and Unilever United States.

“At IBM, we feel that our implementation of the specification is very robust, and believe it will be very quickly certified,” Asher says. “We've been incorporating information from the evolution of the specification and the pilots we've conducted involving preliminary versions of the specification.”

Additionally, SAP will submit its software to the certification program, says Krish Mantripragada, SAP's global head of RFID and auto-ID solutions. In March, the company announced its Object Event Repository database software. Based on the EPCIS candidate standard, the Object Event Repository is designed to aggregate RFID, sensor and other identifying data from warehouse management systems and other software applications spread across an organization (see [SAP Introduces Software for Product Tracking](#)).

GlobeRanger has already tested its iMotion software in interoperability tests and “plans to be one of the first in the certification program once it is made available by EPCglobal,” says GlobeRanger’s VP of engineering and chief architect, Bryan Tracey, who also serves as cochair of EPCglobal’s Software Action Group.

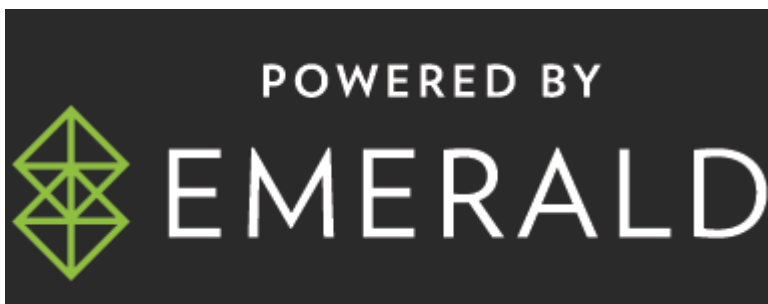
The company’s iMotion middleware is designed for managing devices, networks, data and processes at the edge of the enterprise. Tracey says the EPCIS standard will enable iMotion to manage RFID and product events. “We’ve been creating a lot of these proprietary business observations, and now we have an opportunity to standardize the creation of these EPC events,” he says. “This has been, personally, an extremely important and exciting ratification event.”



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