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RFID News Roundup

The following are news announcements made during the past week by the following organizations:

Swirl Networks, Hudson's Bay, Lord & Taylor;

the European Commission;

Technology Solutions (UK) Ltd.;

Veacon, Turkish Airlines;

PharmaSeq, the University of Illinois; Fujitsu, and Kobayashi

Create Co.

Hudson's Bay and Lord & Taylor Stores Roll Out Swirl's Beacons

Swirl Networks has announced that the HBC Department Store Group is deploying Swirl's Bluetooth beacon in-store marketing platform to help deliver digital experiences to consumers' smartphones while they shop at the company's department stores in Canada and the United States. The Swirl platform leverages Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) for Android smartphones and Apple's iBeacon technology to deliver targeted content and offers to consumers based on their specific location and behavior at the store. The iBeacon uses BLE transmitters that can communicate with nearby iOS 7 devices.

According to Swirl, its beacon marketing platform will enable Hudson's Bay and Lord & Taylor to automatically deliver branded content and personalized offers to in-store shoppers through company-owned and third-party mobile apps. The HBC Department Store Group operates more than 130 Hudson's Bay and Lord & Taylor department stores across North America. Currently, the beacons are live at five Lord & Taylor stores in New York City and Boston, as well as at five Hudson's Bay stores in Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver and Calgary, according to Rob Murphy, Swirl's VP of marketing. Other stores, he says, will be added in the future.

The beacons work with users of third-party shopping app SnipSnap, Murphy says, and are being integrated with the Hudson's Bay Gift Registry app. Other HBC and third-party apps will be added in the future, he notes.

European Commission Publishes Standards to Alert Consumers to RFID Use

The European Commission (EC) has announced new technical standards designed to help organizations that employ RFID-enabled smart chips and systems comply with the European

Union's data-protection rules, as part of the EU Data Protection Directive and the EC's 2009 recommendation on RFID (see European Privacy and Security Standards). A "data protection impact assessment" process has also been agreed on, according to the EC.



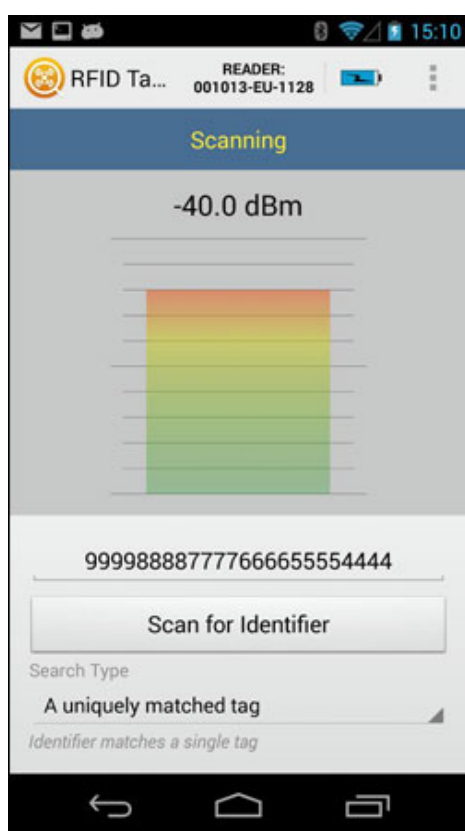
The EC's RFID sign

The standards will apply to RFID applications for electronic travel passes and item-level retail tagging, and will focus on alerting consumers that smart chips are present, via a common European RFID logo, or sign. This alerting will ensure that retailers using RFID technology to improve stock management and prevent theft comply with current EU data-protection rules. Specifically, the new standards define the requirements for a Common European Notification Signage system to be used by operators of RFID application systems deployed within EU member states.

The new technical standards are designed to help companies or public authorities that utilize smart chips comply with rules requiring them to give consumers clear and simple information so that they understand if their personal data will be used, along with the type of data collected (such as their name, address or date of birth, for example, when registering for a travel subscription card), and for what purpose; provide clear labeling to identify the devices that read the information stored in smart chips, as well as a contact point for citizens to obtain more information; and conduct privacy and data-protection impact assessments, reviewed by national data-protection authorities, prior to using smart chips.

TSL Announces RFID-enabled Mobile Software App for Android Devices

Technology Solutions (UK) Ltd. (TSL) has announced the availability of a new application designed to locate RFID-tagged assets. The RFID Tag Finder application for Android-powered devices works with the company's ultrahigh-frequency (UHF) 1128 Bluetooth RFID reader, connected via Bluetooth to an Android smartphone or tablet, and uses audible and visual indicators to locate tagged items, much like a Geiger counter.



TSL's RFID Tag Finder app

The 1128 reader, released in May 2013 (see RFID News Roundup: Technology Solution (UK) Ltd. Announces Bluetooth Handheld UHF RFID Reader), is designed to communicate wirelessly with a variety of Bluetooth-enabled mobile devices, including Motorola's MC40 handheld computer, as well as smartphones, touchscreen MP3 players, tablets and PCs. The reader is designed to read and write to tags compliant with the EPC Gen 2 and ISO 18000-6C standard, and incorporates TSL's unique

ASCII protocol, which provides a developer with a set of commands that carry out multiple actions locally within the Bluetooth reader.

The RFID Tag Finder app, available as a free download from the Google Play website, provides three search modes—optimized for locating a unique tag identifier, an identifier matching a few tags, or an identifier matching a large group of tags, according to the company. To use the app, personnel enter an item code and then sweep large areas in order to scan a warehouse or store room to locate the matching RFID tag. As a worker nears the item he or she is trying to locate, the app triggers audio feedback and the signal strength is displayed on a dynamic, graphical interface. The app then displays a list of nearby tags, ranked by signal strength.

Turkish Airlines Implements Veacon Beacons at Istanbul Ataturk Airport

Turkish Airlines has announced a new service for its customers that leverages Apple's iBeacon technology, which uses Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) technology and consists of transmitters that can communicate with nearby iOS 7 devices. The new service, being offered to all of the airline's guests at Istanbul Ataturk Airport's Lounge Istanbul, is designed to work with the airline's Sky Library application.

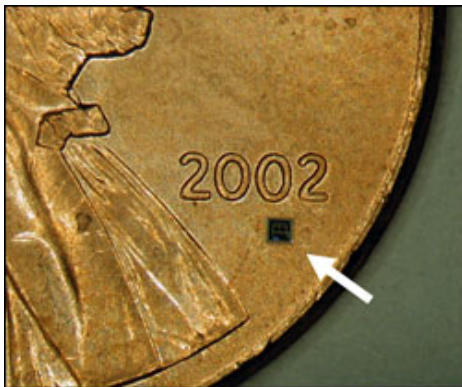
This service will enable Lounge Istanbul's guests to access, free of charge, the airline's publications, as well as popular books in the fields of management, brands, marketing and communications, and fairy tale and story books for children of all ages. Guests will also be able to view any information regarding Lounge Istanbul on their devices. The solution was developed by Veacon, a startup backed by Valensas Technology, a Turkish enterprise mobility company.

The solution includes Veacon's Apple-certified iBeacon sensors—which leverage Texas Instruments' CC2541 system-on-

chip Bluetooth transceiver and custom firmware developed by Veacon—according to Akin Idil, a partner and engineer at Veacon. At the airport, three beacons were installed in the lounge. “They are evenly distributed within the lounge area to get good coverage,” Idil explains. “Given the current size, shape and area of the lounge, three are enough to cover the entire area.”

RFID Helps Study Busy Bees

In yet another research project aimed at better understanding the behavior of bees, scientists attached RFID tags to hundreds of individual honeybees and tracked them for several weeks. The scientists, including Gene E. Robinson, the director of the University of Illinois’ Institute for Genomic Biology, who led the research, and citizen scientist Paul Tenczar, conducted the study to better understand the activity of individual bees within a hive.



p-Chip on a U.S. penny

The study’s two key findings were that a few individual foraging bees are much busier than others, and that if those busy bees disappear, others will take their place. Tenczar developed the technique for attaching RFID tags to bees and tracking their flight activity via monitors. According to Tenczar, the RFID equipment used during the project was provided by PharmaSeq, based in Princeton, N.J., and included p-Chip microtransponders that measure 0.5 millimeter by 0.5 millimeter by 0.1 millimeter (0.02 inch by 0.02 inch by 0.004

inch) and weigh just 85 micrograms (0.000003 ounce).

The chips are unobtrusive enough for many insects to retain normal mobility after attachment, PharmaSeq reports. The p-Chip carries photocells that, when illuminated by laser light from a reader, provide power and synchronization signals for the chip's electronic circuits. Each p-Chip's memory is encoded with a unique serial number that is transmitted by an on-chip antenna via a 1 MHz RF signal. The chip's 30-bit memory capacity currently allows for more than 1.1 billion unique IDs, PharmaSeq reports. The p-Chips are manufactured on wafers in silicon foundries using processes (CMOS) similar to those used in the manufacturing of memory chips and computer processors.

The bee-tracking project also leveraged PharmaSeq's Reading Wand 8000, a small, handheld device capable of reading the IDs of individual p-Chips. Each ID is instantaneously read, with a range of up to 10 millimeters (0.04 inch), when the implanted p-Chip is placed in the beam of light emitted by the wand; the laser emits 5 to 60 mW of optical power at 660 nm. Partially transparent material, such as a layer of skin, plastic or frost, will not typically prevent tags from being read, according to PharmaSeq.

The chips were glued to the thorax of adult worker honeybees, and an apparatus with two wands was attached to the hive's front. As bees exited or entered the hive and moved through a tunnel, the wands read the tags. The study's findings have been reported in the *Animal Behaviour* journal. According to the University of Illinois, tagging the bees revealed that approximately 20 percent of the foraging bees within a hive brought home more than half of the nectar and pollen gathered to feed the hive.

"We found that some bees are working very, very hard—as we would have expected," Robinson said in a prepared statement. "But then we found some other bees that were not working as

hard as the others.” The National Science Foundation and the Christopher Family Foundation supported the research.

Fujitsu Adds RFID-enabled Solution to Its Akisai Food and Agriculture Cloud

Fujitsu has announced that it will enhance its production-management service lineup for the Akisai Food and Agriculture Cloud—a service that has been designed to provide comprehensive support to all aspects of agricultural management, such as for administration, production and sales in open field cultivation, horticulture and animal husbandry—by adding an RFID-enabled production-management system. Fujitsu plans to begin selling the service this month, only in Japan.



Fujitsu’s RFID-enabled plant-production management system

The RFID system is provided by Kobayashi Create Co., a company that has begun to produce and sell vegetables grown within plant factories. Such factories enable the ongoing production of plants, regardless of season, by providing the requisites for growth in a human-controlled environment—including LED lighting, ventilation and liquid nutrients.

The production-management system is designed to manage the production of plant factories and greenhouse horticulture, Fujitsu reports, and leverages RFID tags and handheld readers for the onsite collection of data related to work histories,

from planting to harvest. The service is suited to manage plant growth within plant factories and greenhouse horticulture sites that manage cultivated crops by respective lot, the company indicates, or that raise a variety of crops in small quantities.

With the new service, workers can hold up a handheld reader to RFID tags or 2D bar-coded labels assigned to each respective lot, enabling the system to individually identify employees and input their work results. Data from the handheld can be transferred to and stored on an office PC, and that information can then be analyzed to establish trends, verify work progress and review growing conditions for each individually managed lot. In addition, Fujitsu reports, the sharing of results among agricultural producers promotes the acquisition of cultivation techniques and improved work quality.

In the future, Fujitsu plans to integrate the data collected from this service with information culled from other Akisai services, to create an entire supply chain encompassing ordering, production, shipping and inventory management. Fujitsu intends to deploy this service in October 2014 at its own plant factory in Aizu-Wakamatsu, where it produces low-potassium lettuce.



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