

Recent RFID News of Note for Week of Nov. 24, 2008

Patent Pool Blessed; Defining an Internet of Things; Tracking Food Safety; Financing from Microsoft for RFID Systems

SCDigest Editorial Staff

These are some of the news highlights over the past few weeks in RFID.

US Government Blesses Patent Pool: The US Department of Justice issued a favorable preliminary opinion on the so-called RFID "patent pool," a large group of RFID technology companies gathered under an umbrella organization called the RFID Consortium. Members have agreed to a framework for licensing RFID patents. (See [RFID Patent Pool, Take 2](#).) The DOJ looked at whether there were anti-trust issues with the Consortium, but found any such issues were minor compared the potential of the arrangement to speed RFID technology adoption.

The upshot for users: the potential for the Consortium to speed technology development remains in place, and users have little to fear these data from getting embroiled in patent disputes between vendors.

Europe Commission Debates the "Internet of Things": We're not sure where it really came from, but SCDigest first heard the term "Internet of Things" from internet luminary Esther Dyson around the time of the launch of the EPCGlobal organization at a conference in Chicago in 2003. Dyson had written an article using that term shortly before that conference, and was the keynote speaker there. (See [Internet Maven Esther Dyson's Unique Take on RFID](#).)

At that first EPC Global conference, Dyson said "The promise of RFID is to make each item individually visible to readers than scan them, and to build and make use of an IT infrastructure behind them. If you build those investment-returning systems with some basic object identification standards in place, you get

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persistent identity of all these objects (almost) for free."

Now, a group called CASAGRAS (Coordination and Support Action for Global RFID-related Activities and Standardization), which has received funding from the European Union to look at RFID and the Internet of Things potential, is debating what the term should really mean. The general opinion now is that it should include a lot more than RFID – for example, other data collection technologies and connectivity options (e.g., your refrigerator connected to the internet, whether it uses RFID or not).

We will report on the group's preliminary report in more detail next week.

Lowry Releases Food Tracking Application: Lowry Computer Systems, a supply chain systems integrator, announced the release of a "Secure Visibility" solution, a set of software modules that can provide complete visibility from field to store

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shelf in the food supply chain. The system leverages RFID and mobile and fixed readers, in combination as appropriate with bar codes. `

The scope of the solution is impressive, in terms of its end-to-end vision, and could be used in other industries outside the food supply chain. A videocast from SCDigest detailing this solution can be found here: [RFID in Food Supply Chain](#).

Xterprise Leverages Microsoft Financing for Customers: In a tight financial and budgeting environment, RFID solution company Xterprise announced it can tap into the financial strength of partner Microsoft to provide financing for new RFID-based solutions. The financing packages will cover hardware, software and services, and will offer no payments or interest for 180 days. Packages will range from 12-48 months.



Workers in Field Using Lowry's RFID Tracking Solution