

In Inevitable Move, RFID World Conference Expands Focus to Additional Technologies and Software

RFID Trajectory Continues to Mirror that of Bar Coding Before It

SCDigest Editorial Staff

The RFID World conference and trade show, first held in 2003, announced this week it was changing the name of the event and expanding the focus, in the face of disappointing attendance and exhibitor presence at the 2008 show held in September.

The show will be rebranded "RF Edge" and will be held in Dallas (where the conference was originally held) in October. As the elimination of the term "RFID" from the title, the event managers are trying to broaden the scope of technologies and solutions beyond RFID.

Interestingly, the name RF Edge is also used by a small radio frequency/microwave system provider in California.

While RFID is expected to remain the centerpiece of the event, the vendor mix will change to include such technologies as sensors, GPS, and various software solutions.

The show has a brief announcement on its web site, noting that "RFID doesn't work alone. It takes other technologies to build a complete system."

Déjà vu All Over Again

The path of RFID in many respects mirrors its auto ID technology predecessor bar coding.

In the early days of bar code, in the early 1990s, the market supported two large trade shows (Scan Tech and ID Systems). As the market matured, meaning

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few vendors and less "mystery" around the technology, those two shows combined, continuing to use the Scan Tech name.

A few years later, attendance at that show faltered, and it was rebranded as "Frontline," largely ditching its auto ID/bar coding roots. But that show never really caught on and folded in 2005, after several years of dismal attendance.

The RFID industry in the US had at least three major shows/conferences in 2008, including the EPC Global conference, RFID Journal Live, and RFID World.

That's just too many events for them all to be successful, SCDigest editor Dan Gilmore observes.

"The RFID market is following the path of the bar code market in many ways, including trade shows," Gilmore said. "The combination of technology maturity on one hand and the fact that the adoption level, especially in consumer goods to

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retail, has failed to fully meet expectations and it's probably not realistic to think the industry needs or can support that many major events."

Gilmore says expanding the scope of technology areas covered at the show, such as the new RF Edge event is attempting to do, is the logical choice for event managers, but tough to pull off.

"I do think there is enough opportunity for companies in wireless technologies and applications generally that this could be a solid event," said Gilmore. "But it will mean attracting a whole new segment of users. Eventually, RFID will become just another data collection technology,



**RFID World is Now RF Edge
- Minus the "ID"**

similar to bar coding, and there won't be enough newness or complexity to justify a major event on its own."