

## RFID AND AIDC FOCUS

**A**IM Global, an industry organization that represents the interests of automatic identification (auto ID) and wireless manufacturers and systems providers, announced in December that long time president **Dan Mullen** was out as head of the organization, and that it was searching for a new executive.

It's a new world today - SCDigest was first alerted to the change from a "Linked In" invitation from Mullen that clearly indicated a change in roles.

AIM was once short for "Automatic Identification Manufacturers." Now, the acronym is said to represent the "Association for Identification and Mobility." It is headquartered in Pittsburgh.

Like many organizations, AIM Global has faced challenges in recent years, not the least of which is that continuing consolidation among system providers has meant fewer member candidates for the organization. Our quick look at the members list on [AIM's web site](#) shows some 80 companies, ranging from industry giants such as Motorola and - interestingly - WalMart (one of the few members that is not a technology vendor), as well of dozens of much smaller companies.

Some also felt that AIM missed the boat over RFID. While AIM played a decisive role in the development of the bar code market and growth in awareness and recognition of bar code-based technologies in the 1990s, it has been much less prominent in the development of RFID in the 2000s, ceding ground the first the

## Auto ID Association's Dan Mullen Out as President

AIM Global Makes Change as it Tries to Start New Auto ID Trade Show in 2010;

Can AIM Reclaim Meaningful Role for End Users of Auto ID Technologies?

### SCDigest Editorial Staff

Auto ID Center at MIT and then its successor EPCglobal, as well as other organizations.

SCDigest Editor Dan Gilmore, who worked with AIM in the 1990s, says that was a big mistake.

"I think AIM really missed an opportunity to be a major player in RFID education, standards and market development," Gilmore says. "But in my experience AIM has been a slow moving organization that has to get consensus among its members and board, and it represents all auto ID technologies, not just RFID. I am sure that was a factor."

Mullen became president in November, 2003, after serving as interim president before that. "The AIM Board and staff wish to express our appreciation to Dan

Mullen for his long and loyal service to AIM, and wish him success as he pursues other interests," said **Dr. Clive Hohberger**, a long time researcher at Zebra Technologies and Chairman of the AIM Board of Directors.

"Looking ahead, the AIM Board will seek a vision-oriented individual with strong leadership experience and knowledge of the AIDC industry to enable the Association to grow and to ensure the success of the launch of the AIM Expo 2010."

In the interim, **Mary Lou Bosco**, AIM COO, will serve as acting Executive Director of AIM until a new president takes office.

In the 1990s, AIM enjoyed prominence as it developed many standards for bar codes

and other auto ID technologies, such as magnetic stripes. For several years, it ran and enjoyed financial success with its Scan-Tech trade show, at that time the primary venue for bar code and wireless technologies, among other auto ID solution categories. Scan-Tech became a major event, with hundreds of exhibitors and thousands of attendees for several years.

But the organization had trouble effectively managing the huge event, and eventually sold it off. As bar coding and wireless technologies became more mainstream, the need for specialized trade shows for them declined, and the eventual successor to Scan-Tech, the Frontline show, folded in the early 2000s.

AIM is most likely trying to rethink its role in the world. In general, it is not very visible to companies that use auto ID technologies - only to its members. Some of its standards work has been lost to groups such as ISO, and since the death of Scan-Tech it has not really found a path to command much "end user" attention.

The organization is trying to get back into the trade show game, having announced plans for AIM Expo 2010 to



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be held next November in Chicago. Getting this event off the ground and successful will be a big challenge for the organization and any new leader. Such events can substantially bolster an or-

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ganization's budget, if successful, but also cause financial pain if it fails to meet expectations.