

RFID Journal LIVE! 2008 Report

More than 3,300 attendees from around the world gathered in Las Vegas to attend RFID Journal's sixth annual RFID Journal LIVE! conference and exhibition in April. View the presentations from the event.

May 19, 2008—[RFID Journal LIVE! 2008](#), RFID Journal's sixth annual conference and exhibition, was held April 16-18 at The Venetian hotel in Las Vegas. LIVE! 2008 marked the company's largest RFID event to date, with more than 3,300 attendees gathered at the conference. Speaker presentations and videos from the event are now available—see the final page of this story for downloading instructions.

The conference commenced with general-session presentations from Gregory L. Johnston, executive VP of [Wal-Mart's Sam's Club](#) subsidiary, and Anush Kumar, senior product director of [Microsoft](#). The event also featured keynote speeches from Bob McDonald, chief operating officer of [Procter & Gamble](#) (P&G), and Ray Martino, chief technology officer of [Motorola's Enterprise Mobility division](#). (See [Sam's Club, P&G Discuss Sharing RFID's Value](#)).

Wal-Mart was among the early adopters to use Electronic Product Codes (EPCs) to improve on-shelf availability and reduce supply chain costs, and the retailer is now taking steps to implement the technology at its Sam's Club locations across the United States. In his opening speech, Johnston discussed how Sam's Club is using RFID technology in its operations.

Explaining the differences in applications between Sam's Clubs with different formats, Johnston said he believes the retailer and its suppliers will all profit from RFID implementation. Though he noted that Sam's Club considers its RFID mandate plans (see [Sam's Club Tells Suppliers to Tag or Pay](#)) to be reasonable, he also acknowledged and thanked the many suppliers in attendance at the event. "We ask a lot of our suppliers, and you deliver a lot," Johnston said, adding that RFID "will bring a benefit to all of us."

Kumar offered a presentation exploring how high-performing companies are looking to connect their internal departments, support networks and improve demand and supply chains. By reducing the cost and complexity of infrastructure plumbing for real-time applications, Microsoft and its partners are enabling mass adoption of RFID, service-oriented architecture (SOA) and business-to-business solutions by developing systems enabling users to gain productivity and business efficiencies with integrated real-time information in day-to-day business processes.

Microsoft announced at the show that it has entered into beta testing on a version of its BizTalk RFID middleware built to run on mobile RFID readers. Kumar joined with RFID solutions providers [Xterprise](#) and [S3Edge](#) to describe the process of testing the beta software with customers.

McDonald, in his keynote presentation, explained how P&G, a founding member of the Auto-ID Center, developed the concept of storing EPCs on low-cost RFID tags. Since then, the company has explored how the technology could be used, in collaboration with retail partners, to improve supply chain efficiencies.

Charting the early research into RFID initiated by engineering teams at P&G and [Gillette](#) (purchased by P&G in 2005), McDonald urged retailers and suppliers to work together to extract what he called shared value creation from RFID. He offered a scorecard for EPC adoption in the retail sector, awarding an A-minus for standards development but Cs for retailer engagement and shared value creation.

Finally, Martino explored how the evolution of RFID technologies has provided a growing set of capabilities and platforms for data capture and information management. With a focus on how some companies are seeking to leverage RFID solutions to address new business challenges, he discussed the benefits RFID currently provides users in a variety of industries, as well as how the technology is converging across the data capture, mobility and communication arenas.

"RFID is no longer a matter of a portal in the backroom," Martino said. "You can expect to see RFID in the front of the store, [and to] change the shopping experience." He advised RFID users to consider not only technology they think will be a "good fit" for their application, but also how it can be expected to perform in the future.

New Technologies

More than 175 providers of RFID hardware, software and services demonstrated in the 100,000-square-foot exhibit hall, which sold out before the event commenced (see [Exhibit Hall at RFID Journal LIVE! 2008 Is Sold Out](#)). A wide range of new product and technology announcements were made at the show, and end users in a number of industries explained how they are currently employing RFID to improve their operations and processes.

During a panel discussion, representatives of CPG manufacturers [Kraft Foods](#), P&G and [Kimberly-Clark](#) offered feedback based on their tests—and, in one case, deployment—of the STAR system from [Mojix](#) (see [New RFID Technology Helps Kraft, P&G, Kimberly-Clark Go the Distance](#)).

Kraft has tested and deployed the Mojix system at its warehouse in Germany, from which it shipped RFID-tagged product headed for German retailer [Metro](#). "We're very pleased with the results [from STAR]," said Mark Pollock, Kraft's director of customer development for integrated store logistics, deeming the possibilities for using the technology in a large warehouse "limitless."

P&G, according to Mark Morrow, the company's EPC technology leader for corporate engineering, has been testing the system for more than a year at its RFID test lab. During that time, Morrow told attendees, the company has succeeded in employing a single interrogator to read tags moving through 49 dock doors, as well as others outside the lab or mounted on RF-unfriendly metal racks. "Our primary use case for the reader," Morrow explained, "is reading case tags, versus just pallet tags, on pallets moving through dock doors."

According to John Onderko, a scientist and packaging engineer for RFID at Kimberly-Clark, K-C did not yet have a strong use case for the technology when it first began testing the Mojix system last year, though it eventually identified one. "We were having a hard time tracking tagged pallets of finished goods moving from a production facility to a warehouse," he stated, "so we [installed the reader to monitor tags moving through] a few outbound dock doors. Honestly, it worked so well we got bored with it after a while, so we got creative and started tracking raw materials and the lift trucks that move them around the facility."

In addition, Kimberly-Clark has nearly completed a pilot project employing passive EPC Gen 2-compliant RFID tags to track the locations of trailers fitted with finished goods or raw materials at one of its manufacturing facilities in Beech Island, S.C. (see [Kimberly-Clark Sees Positive Results With PINC Trailer Tracker System](#)). Corey Mingerink, the company's senior RFID packaging engineer, described the pilot for LIVE! 2008 attendees, dubbing the tests a major success. With K-C's manual tracking system, he explained, it could take up to three hours for workers to locate a specific trailer at the site, but thanks to

the RFID system, it now takes minutes. From a labor savings and productivity standpoint, Mingerink indicated, K-C stands to realize a clear return on investment from RFID.

Mojix's STAR system won the "Best in Show" award at this year's [RFID Journal Awards](#) ceremony, held at the event (see [Mojix Wins First-Ever Best in Show Award at RFID Journal LIVE! 2008](#)). Other winners included [Airbus](#) for "Best RFID Implementation," [Agence Metropolitaine de Transport](#) for "Best Use of RFID in a Service" and [Interface Flor](#) for "Most Innovative Use of RFID" (see [In Recognition of Excellence](#)). The four companies and their winning solutions will be profiled in the May/June 2008 print issue of *RFID Journal* magazine.

The health-care industry was the focus of several presentations and exhibits at LIVE! 2008. Ann Ferriter, issue manager for the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Center for Devices and Radiological Health](#) (CDRH), said the agency hopes to issue draft specifications by the end of 2008 for a nationwide system that could be employed to identify—and, if necessary, locate and recall—specific medical devices and supplies (see [U.S. FDA Seeks Research for Medical Device Tracking System](#)).

According to Ferriter, the FDA is now seeking input from the RFID industry, and from end users that have piloted RFID systems in the health-care market, regarding the effects RFID has on other transmissions in a hospital setting, and on the devices themselves. Although the FDA recognizes the tracking and visibility benefits RFID provides the health-care industry, she said, the CDRH hope to see additional studies, particularly those focusing on the use of 13.56 MHz wristbands in hospitals.

Additionally, health-care products manufacturer [Johnson & Johnson](#) announced that it is using RFID technology for a range of applications (see [Johnson & Johnson Finds Value in Multiple RFID Apps](#)). Mike Rose, the company's VP of RFID EPCglobal value chain, told audience members that his company employs RFID to comply with retailer mandates that certain products be shipped with RFID tags attached at the case and pallet level. Rose said the firm has also conducted tests involving the use of RFID tags to track promotional product displays at RFID-enabled retail locations, and is currently utilizing the technology to manage surgical implants.

Also presenting at LIVE! 2008 was the [Travis County Fire Marshall](#) in Austin, Texas, which is employing RFID to manage 2,500 items of evidence. The office is utilizing the Clues system, provided by [Intelligentz](#), to monitor the location of each piece of evidence for active cases, as well as those for archived cases up to 10 years old.

Tony Calloway and Tate Markey, deputy chiefs at the Travis County Fire Marshall's office, described the system for conference attendees, explaining that they turned to RFID after the state extended its statute of limitations on the prosecution of arson and other crimes from five years to seven, and then to 10. RFID, they reported, has greatly simplified the process of tracking all of the active and archived evidence (see [Travis County Fire Marshall Uses RFID to Manage Evidence](#)).

[VRF-Holding](#) announced and demonstrated a new line of dynamic item-level markdown tags at the event. Managing partner Ed Holcomb said the firm has developed three prototype battery-assisted passive (BAP) or active tags, each containing dynamic electronic paper (e-paper) displays. The tags can be utilized for automatic markdowns, as well as for inventory and theft control within retail settings (see [VRF Offering Dynamic Price Tags](#)).