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ZEBRA TECHNOLOGIES REVEALS TOP 5 RFID GEN 2 “DOs” and “DON’Ts”

Vernon Hills, Ill. January 11, 2006 – The first EPCglobal Class 1 Generation 2 radio frequency identification (RFID) products are reaching the market, which is accelerating Gen 2’s rise to become the leading RFID protocol for supply chain and compliance initiatives. Zebra Technologies (Nasdaq: ZBRA), a global leader in flexible, on-demand printing solutions to help companies improve business performance and a ten-year veteran of RFID innovation, reveals the following Gen 2 “do’s” and “don’ts” to help companies avoid potential implementation pitfalls.

Do go straight to Gen 2 if you are starting RFID pilots now.

Gen 2 protocols offer significant performance enhancements over the first generation of EPCglobal UHF protocols, including superior tag throughput, improved accuracy and compliance with global spectrum regulations. Many new vendors have committed to supporting EPC Generation 2, allowing users to leverage standards-based interoperability among tags, interrogators, printer/encoders, etc. as well as aggressive pricing spawned by competition.

Don’t overlook your RFID basics – communication of data is still key to success.

Gen 2 – while a major milestone in RFID technology improvements – does not mean that users can bypass the learning curve associated with an RFID pilot. They will still need to understand the physical requirements of laying out an RFID environment to minimize RF interference from hardware and to optimize read rates. Ideally, users should identify where RFID data is generated, transmitted and utilized, so business process and operational improvements – such as better real-time visibility of products and inventories in the supply chain – can be achieved. Issues such as training personnel and establishing metrics and milestones to determine progress also will need to be addressed. To ensure your RFID implementation is as smooth and seamless as possible, turn to seasoned, trusted RFID specialists who have a solid track record in the technology.

Do thorough research and testing of Gen 2 products to ensure compatibility and feature support.

Gen 2 is a flexible standard that can be implemented in different ways by different vendors. With dozens of variations of Gen 2-compliant tags and hundreds more likely on the horizon, chips may vary in memory size, programming speed and other characteristics.

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In addition, different antenna designs can perform better or worse when distance or orientation to interrogators is changed. Also consider that the amount of power the printer/encoder requires to write data to the RFID chip is a complex function of the inlay's chip type, antenna design, and antenna size. Users may need to use different tag designs to provide optimal read performance on a variety of items. Each set of tags may require different encoding power levels, making it important for printer/encoder settings to be easily changed by the user -- without extensive IT support or reprogramming. Test Gen 2 media thoroughly to ensure the tags selected truly support your application. Experienced solution providers can help you select smart label media optimized for your printer/encoder and for your application.

Do plan to support a multi-protocol environment.

The arrival of Gen 2 does not signal the retirement or obsolescence of other RFID protocols. Gen 1 tags will likely be used through 2007 until existing supplies are exhausted. And today's RFID technologies will evolve into future generations in the coming years. In addition, different protocol standards can be used for different applications, just as numerous bar code symbologies are used today. Organizations should build their RFID infrastructure with multi-protocol printer/encoders and interrogators. Multi-protocol equipment provides investment protection and simplifies upgrades because it can simultaneously support different RFID standards and tag types.

Don't buy a short-term solution. A flexible, configurable and upgradeable RFID infrastructure is required to support Gen 2 and beyond, as well as allow users to reap the business benefits of improved operations. Features like multi-protocol support, software-defined radios and adjustable power settings provide long-term investment protection and lower the total cost of ownership of your RFID infrastructure as it matures and evolves. When evaluating RFID investments, determine if the products: 1) meet your current needs for protocols, options and features; 2) include simultaneous support for multiple RFID protocols; and 3) offer a low-cost, clear, easy and efficient upgrade path that can sustain operations with minimal disruption.

For more information on RFID smart label printing/encoding, download Zebra's white papers, "[Gen 2 Implications for Smart Label Printing](#)," and "[Managing the EPC Generation Gap: An Overview of EPC Standard Migration from Generation 1 to Generation 2 Tags](#)" from Zebra's Web site. To learn more about Zebra's market-leading RFID products, please call +1 800 423 0442 or visit Zebra's RFID Web site at <http://www.rfid.zebra.com>

About Zebra Technologies

Zebra Technologies Corp. (Nasdaq: ZBRA) delivers innovative and reliable on-demand printing solutions for business improvement and security applications in 100 countries around the world. More than 90 percent of Fortune 500 companies use Zebra-brand printers. A broad range of applications benefit from Zebra-brand thermal bar code, "smart" label, receipt, wristband and card printers, resulting in enhanced security, increased productivity, improved quality, lower costs, and better customer service. The company has sold nearly five million printers, including RFID printer/encoders and wireless mobile solutions, and also offers software, connectivity solutions and printing supplies. Information about Zebra bar code and RFID products can be found at <http://www.zebra.com>.