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Dietze Enterprises Takes Lead Retrieval Technology Into 21st Century

CHICAGO, IL — Lead retrieval at trade shows once meant collecting as many business cards as possible in a large glass fish bowl. Today, however, a faster and easier approach that's revolutionizing lead retrieval and session tracking involves using paper name badges embedded with Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology.

And Chicago-based Dietze Enterprises, Inc. (DEI) is leading the way.

"In the next few years, DEI hopes to help turn the trade show industry into a much more ideal place to gather qualified sales leads through RFID technology," said Vaughn Dietze, founder and president of DEI.

He explained: "RFID offers important advantages over traditional two-dimensional (2D) barcode and magnetic-stripe badges. The 2D barcode badges need line-of-sight aiming and are notorious for having to be scanned repeatedly. Mag-stripe cards must be removed from the visitor's badge holder to be swiped, and are too-easily demagnetized, requiring the issuance of replacement badges. RFID-encoded badges offer 100% read accuracy in a fraction of the time required by other technologies."

DEI was the first lead retrieval company to enter the tradeshow market in 1989, specializing in technology-based systems and services. Originally a travel agent who worked with tradeshow organizers coordinating hotel and airfare accommodations for show attendees and exhibitors, Dietze acted on a need for a more advanced and efficient system than a name tag and a permanent marker to register show attendees.

By 1989, he took advantage of an absence of businesses specializing in tradeshow lead retrieval services with the launch of DEI. His first lead retrieval product utilized embossed cards and card imprinters. In 1996, he differentiated himself from the competition, which was now using embossed cards, 1D barcodes and magnetic-stripe cards, by going directly to using 2D barcode technology, which stores more information than embossed cards, mag-stripe cards and 1D barcodes. The 2D barcode essentially acts as a portable database that stores all the attendee's necessary information without the need to access an external database, a requirement of 1D barcodes.

By 2003, however, RFID technology was fast evolving and Dietze began developing applications for tradeshow lead retrieval using radio waves. RFID has enabled exhibitors to gather information quickly about attendees who visit their booths without the awkward requirement of line-of-

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sight needed by a barcode scanner. DEI has taken the technology a step further with the development of a new lead retrieval product: the RFBADGE™.

The RFBADGE (patent pending) is a paper badge with 2 layers. Within the layers is an antenna-equipped electronic storage device that contains encrypted attendee registration information. This information is then collected, via radio frequency, by an RFBADGE reader that can scan the badge from a distance of between 2 to 6 inches.

The RFBADGE was designed to meet the needs of tradeshow organizers and exhibitors. Badges can be printed and encoded with attendee information in one efficient step (vs. the multi-step process required by some other systems), easing the registration process. In addition to being paired with a built-in printer, the RFBADGE reader scans and stores information scanned from the badge's chips at exhibitors' booths. The system is also cost-competitive with other lead retrieval approaches.

"The RFBADGE provides exhibitors a complete record of visitors to their booths – we can turn around a list from information stored in the reader within minutes at the end of the exhibition day," explained Dietze. "RFBADGE also provides an added measure of security, access control and more efficient management of trade shows, which appeals to organizers."

The RFBADGE concept was first used at the RFID World Conference in April 2004, and was the talk of the show. As Paul Diemer, vice president of conference organizer Shorecliff Communications, put it: "The ability to capture information about key prospects without the clumsy process of reading a badge with a printed barcode was a hit with our exhibitors and preferred by the attendees as well."

For exhibitors who still want to use barcodes and magnetic-stripe cards for lead retrieval, DEI accommodates the older technology with such products as its SmartScan™ system, a table-top lead retrieval terminal that can be configured to read bar codes, mag-stripe cards, smart cards and RFID (radio frequency identification) tags. DEI also offers NOMAD™, a handheld device with a built-in bar code scanner and custom lead retrieval software.

Dietze predicts that RFID will be the hot topic of 2005 "as organizers and exhibitors become more aware of the benefits of RFID in this environment. We expect its use – and our business – to skyrocket," he said.

DEI is a leading provider of registration and exhibitor lead retrieval products and services to the tradeshow and conference industry, focusing on supplying affordable lead collection systems and support for its products and services. For information, contact Vaughn Dietze, 312.329.9073, or info@Dietze-inc.com.

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