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## New CEO looks to take Reva global

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Lowell Sun

CHELMSFORD -- For Tom Schuster, the decision to join Reva Systems Corp. as its chief executive was an easy one.

"This area has a history for creating world-leading tech companies -- I think Reva can be another, the new Wang if you will," Schuster said boldly. "I am very impressed with what this team has achieved."

"This team," or Reva Systems, is a 30-employee outfit in two buildings on Apollo Drive in Chelmsford. Founded in late 2003, it raised a modest \$6 million in venture funding before emerging from stealth mode about a year ago.

Reva's technology uses radio frequency identification (RFID) to help retailers simplify and enhance the way merchandise is tracked through the supply chain. For retailers, it's commonly seen as the next step up from bar codes.

Schuster was chosen to lead Reva in an intensifying phase of sales growth and larger global focus.

"Wal-Mart is mandating that its top 500 suppliers to use this technology by year's end; the Department of Defense wants its suppliers to incorporate it by next year," said Reva co-founder Ashley Stephenson, who becomes chairman with Schuster's arrival. "This will have a ripple effect on the supply chain."

Stephenson, who founded Xedia Corp. before it was acquired by Lucent Technologies during the late 1990s networking boom, said it was time to get somebody of Schuster's background on board because "the market is more developed."

"The price of the gear is coming down, and there are real deployments across the world," Stephenson said. He said Reva has "a handful" of key customers.

Schuster comes from Arbor Networks, a Lexington-based network security appliance vendor, where he led the company's global expansion to market leadership in 30 countries. He also worked at Bedford's RSA Security.

"The market is coming of age," he said. "Before recently, this technology wasn't reliable for anybody. But Reva has executed. I look forward to winning partners, and getting customers and growing them dramatically."

Reva is part of an RFID advisory board at Middlesex Community College that includes Staples, Oat Systems, Molecular Corp. and Avicon.

Armed with an \$850,000 U.S. Department of Labor grant, Middlesex is starting an RFID curriculum this fall, offering both an associate's degree and 10-month certificate in RFID Technology.

"The program targets displaced workers who have some experience in electronics, as well as those currently working who wish to upgrade their skills" said Neil Scheer, assistant dean of computer engineering & technology at MCC. However, he said, developmental courses will also be offered to those who are interested but don't have such a background.

Scheer said a recent open house drew about 20 interested people.

"Middlesex is one of the few few colleges taking this initiative," added Stephenson. "Now we can recruit students."

Reva was named one of "10 Start-Ups to Watch" by Network World earlier this year, and the company's Tag Acquisition Processor (TAP) recently became the first RFID product to win a "Best of Interop" award.

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