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ActivCard Looks To Displace RSA In Token Accounts

By [Dan Neel](#) CRN

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ActivCard is picking a fight with RSA Security.

Steve Asche, director of marketing at ActivCard, a user-authentication technology vendor in Fremont, Calif., said his company sees an opportunity to work with resellers to displace a large number of RSA SecurID tokens it believes are due to expire over the next six to nine months.

RSA's SecurID tokens—and ActivCard's competing ActivCard tokens—are small, password-generating devices that provide client-side user authentication when signing on to a network. RSA, Bedford, Mass., has an installed base of more than 15 million users for its SecurID tokens, according to the company.

Both vendors agree RSA's three-year tokens are its most popular. ActivCard is gambling that better-than-average earnings by RSA three years ago indicate that a wave of its three-year tokens is about to expire, and the company has adopted reseller discounts and other perks to help convince partners to replace those tokens with ActivCard's offering, Asche said.

Solution providers willing to go after RSA SecurID customers with the competing option will get free ActivCard partner training. Partners will also get ActivCard tokens, priced at \$15 each, that come with no expiration date and a lifetime replacement guarantee.

Licensing fees for the server component of the secure network access solution, which usually starts around \$80 per user, will be cut in half for resellers that displace an RSA install. And an ActivCard WLAN expansion kit valued at \$5,000 will be thrown in for free for ActivCard resellers that manage to displace an entire enterprise-level RSA SecurID token deployment, Asche said.

RSA said it would stand firm in the face of ActivCard's displacement program and not enter into a price war. ActivCard is looking to add to its ranks as many as three new reseller partners in every major metropolitan area of the United States, Asche said.

Still, it will be an uphill battle. ActivCard is squaring off against a formidable opponent, said Chris Zimmermann, security consultant at Atrion Communications Resources, Branchburg, N.J. The mind-set of RSA customers will also be an obstacle, he said. "[Token customers] tend to be very conservative. They want proven technology and like to stay with what they know."

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