Analyst predicts wireless prosperity

ANALYSIS

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Wireless will continue as the fastest growing chip application over the next four years according to IFS2008, the industry forecast seminar run by analyst Future Horizons in London last week.

The four fastest growing chip markets between 2007 and 2012 are: ultra wideband, expected to grow at 139 per cent CAGR 2007-2012; Zigbee, expected to grow at 132 per cent; WiMAX, expected to grow at 63 per cent; and RFID in shops, expected to grow at 87 per cent.

The next four fastest growing application areas will be, according to Future Horizons: robotics, at 46 per cent CAGR 2007-2012; near field communications, at 45 per cent; digital audio broadcast, at 44 per cent; and biometrics, at 34 per cent.

PC growth has been slowing down for decades but it is still expected to grow 11 per cent CAGR in unit terms between 2007 and 2012 from 200 million units this year to 450 million units in 2012, and the PC still accounts for 17 per cent of the semiconductor market. Laptop units are expected to overtake desktop units for the first time this year. The processor still accounts for nearly half the chip cost in a PC.

The odd thing about the mobile phone application is that the value of the semiconductor content remains flat. Semiconductors in mobile phones account for 18.7 per cent of the total semiconductor market and CAGR between 2007 and 2012 is put at a measly 0.1 per cent. This is despite expected unit growth rate of 5.4 per cent 2007-2012 CAGR.

Despite hype about automotive being a growth market, it still only accounts for 8.3 per cent of the total chip market, and the value of chips used in automotive applications is expected to grow at only 13.1 per cent CAGR between 2007 and 2012.

Analyst Chris Ryan said the next killer application could be TV to the mobile video player, rather than TV to the mobile phone.

EACH WEEK *EW* PUTS ITS QUESTIONS TO AN INDUSTRY FIGURE

Q5 SIMON PAYNE
XJTAG

Simon Payne is CEO of boundary scan test firm XJTAG

Q We hear you reckon the UK needs to sort out its electronics events. Why is that?

A The UK has a vibrant and innovative electronics industry but we lack a single international electronics event that attracts tens of thousands of visitors to the UK. This cannot be good for our global competitiveness. It would be great to see a single international event in the UK that united the industry and brought together everyone from large corporations, SMEs and government agencies to trade associations, universities and the VC community.

Q Do you still get something out of attending exhibitions/conferences?

A I would have to say yes, having just returned from Nepcon World Japan with over 2,000 new contacts. This year we will be supporting our growing network of distributors by exhibiting at a number of shows worldwide but XJTAG will still be attending several UK events. With Nepcon at the Birmingham NEC now cancelled, we urge everyone in the electronics industry to support the inaugural National Electronics Week at Earls Court in June.

Q Has the "XJTAG-Inside" idea taken off for your boundary scan technology?

A "XJTAG-Inside" was conceived to enable our growing community of technology partners to integrate the XJTAG boundary scan system with their own specialist test products. It's been a win-win all round as our technology partners gain additional and much sought after BGA test capability as well as the extended capabilities of boundary scan testing. Needless to say, the company is looking to expand the 'XJTAG-Inside' technology partner program during 2008.

Q Is the market for boundary scan technology getting more competitive?

A The increased density of boards and the trend towards BGA packages is driving a worldwide demand for boundary scan. The cost of test in development is now becoming a critical factor and needs to be considered earlier in the design cycle, even before any hardware is produced. We provide a test solution across the whole product life cycle, and by providing reusable code and the ability to test non-JTAG devices, the test development time and cost is reduced. There are very few solutions in the market that take this approach.

Q Does boundary scan always spot problems with component circuitry?

A No test solution can test all of a design but as XJTAG tests JTAG and non-JTAG devices, it is often possible - with a well-designed board - to see test coverage close to 100 per cent. Some designs will need a number of test solutions to achieve an acceptable level of test, which is why XJTAG has a technology partner programme.