A component distributor that goes beyond components

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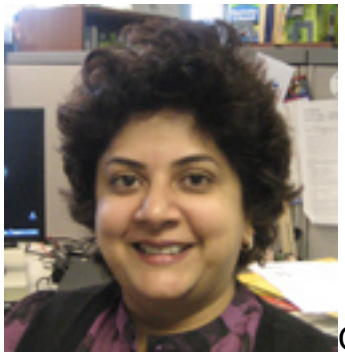

Our parent company, Premier Farnell, has historically been a leading, high service, multi-channel distribution group supporting millions of engineers and purchasing professionals globally through Newark in the Americas, Farnell in Europe and most recently, element14 in Asia. By carrying everything from world-leading brands to emerging best-in-class suppliers, Newark and its sister distributors are well-known for their large inventories, flexible shipping and logistics and supply chain services.

In the past several years, however, the landscape of electronic design and production has changed dramatically. Increased competition, aggressive technical specifications, and shorter development schedules have design teams examining the entire design process for ways to cut down their development time. Increasingly, the trend is to use IP-reuse and platform-based methodologies for designing embedded systems. To successfully employ these methodologies, it is vital to empower engineers by providing them with access to information, hardware, software tools and services--and not just components.

Designers have increasingly relied on distributors for information and technical support related to components, but with the new demands they face, we have been challenged to support them with solutions for their designs and development process as well.

Premier Farnell has taken a leadership role in going “beyond the component” to support and provide designers with the help they need to be successful, and maintain the competitive edge in the market.

In 2009, we launched the element14 community (www.element14.com [1]) – the industry’s first global platform for engineers to collaborate, research, and find solutions for their applications and designs. The community provides a rich and valuable set of information on vertical markets, system design and access to a panel of experts from the leading suppliers and industry. It also provides forums for discussion groups with fellow engineers worldwide.

In September 2009, Premier Farnell also acquired CadSoft

(www.element14.com/cadsoft [2]) - a company specializing in computer-aided printed circuit board (PCB) design tools. CadSoft's EAGLE tool helps PCB designers create the schematic for their electronic product and lay out the board. The best-selling software of its kind in Europe since the early nineties, EAGLE (Easily Applicable Graphical Layout Editor) is a low-cost, easy to use and powerful PC-board design tool. The EAGLE tool is supported by tutorials and videos on how to use the tool that help soften the learning curve. CadSoft also supports the user community contributed ULPs (User Language Programs) that encourage knowledge sharing and accelerate the design process. Since acquiring CadSoft, we have invested significant time, money and resources to make the offering more rich, robust and reliable. The latest version of CadSoft EAGLE has powerful functionality to save designers time and make the entire process of building a PCB board more streamlined. For example, the DesignLink interface allows users to automatically search for parts from a Premier Farnell product database, and provides one-click functionality to:

- Retrieve information (general search or on all components in a schematic) on parts availability, pricing, attributes from Premier Farnell (Newark, element14 or Farnell) product databases.
- Add components/order list to a shopping cart on the respective Premier Farnell site.
- Transfer all board related parameters to integrated PCB fabrication service providers.

An integrated PCB fabrication service (http://www.element14.com/community/pcb-services-pentalogix!choose.jspa [3]) is also available both to EAGLE users and to users of the element14 community. This service is available in partnership with Pentalogix, a PCB manufacturing partner providing expertise in Computer Aided Manufacture (CAM) and Design for Manufacture (DFM). This value-added service helps customers to upload their design files (e.g. Gerber files) with a few simple clicks, receive online quotations for their prototype PCB implementation, check the board for manufacturability (DFM testing) and quickly receive their PCB boards ready to be debugged and tested. Pentalogix processes the board files through Viewmate with SmartDFM checks to deliver perfect PCBs every time! A variety of services are provided to address most customer needs depending on turn around time, volume of boards, cost , special requirements (Mil-spec, ITAR, , or even custom services. This service further augments the coverage of the product development cycle by extending support and accelerating "Design to Prototype" thereby creating a complete lifecycle experience for design customers.

element14 is committed to providing design engineering customers with a unique and complete product lifecycle experience. Through element14, Premier Farnell will continue to add differentiated and innovative service offerings to the electronic design engineering community that help speed design productivity, improve the design process and produce high-quality designs.

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http://www.ecnmag.com/articles/2011/02/component-distributor-goes-beyond-components?qt-recent_content=0

Links:
[1] http://www.element14.com
[2] http://www.element14.com/cadsoft
[3] http://www.element14.com/community/pcb-services-pentalogix!choose.jspa