

Raspberry Pi, Android accessory access, a Smarter Zeus and 48-Volt Systems ... someday

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These were some of the things to catch my eye half-way through electronica 2012.



My first trip to electronica has proven both awesome and challenging. Awesome in the number of new technologies that are on display; challenging in navigating a show that is so expansive. Awesome in how much I love Munich; challenging in that my body is not loving the amount of bier being consumed.

Some common themes from amongst the suppliers and distributors I've visited with include energy efficiency, which isn't a new focal point, but the levels at which they're looking to take it certainly are. Additionally, expanded board-level capabilities, greater connectivity and more fluent power supply options are trending strongly. Here are some additional notes from the half-way mark:

- element 14 offered some insight on a number of interesting developments, including that 56 percent of their total and 75 percent of EU sales occur on line. The distributor also announced some new developments surrounding the ever-popular Raspberry Pi platform, which the company has sold 150,000 of since February of 2012. Shortly, they'll be launching PiView, which enables a cable connection to a VGA monitor and WiPi, which brings WiFi capabilities to the board.
- An interesting development from Maxim included a closer look at their Zeus module for smart metering. It allows for use via power line communication in Europe or wireless communication in places like the U.S. It's estimated that Italy has more than 30 million smart meters, Scandanavia up to eight million and Spain has about one million in place as they ramp up to a goal of 25 million. Although the European community shares many of the same concerns regarding a Smart Grid, it appears that utility companies are reaching out to help improve understanding and engagement. However, economic conditions throughout the continent have relaxed

the initially mandatory implementation.

- A conversation with On Semiconductor offered insight on developments for a 48-volt system for automotive that could be introduced as soon as the 2015 model year to accommodate the growing number of onboard electronic devices. Another possibility being explored by many automotive suppliers is inter-vehicle Ethernet communication.
- FTDI (Future Technology Devices International) provided a look at how they're supporting more USB connectivity with Android Open Accessories. This will allow for expanding board-level capabilities via a USB connection. Simply adding a microcontroller now provides functionality that would have demanded a greater amount of programming.

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