Trending at electronica: More from less

Jeff Reinke, Editorial Director

Okay, so it’s no surprise that the engineering community is continuing to be taxed by a need to shrink both the number of components housed on the board as well as the size of them. So it’s been great to see how a number of semiconductor, power supply, and connector companies are working to provide these solutions.

In wrapping up my time in Munich at electronica 2012, here a couple of conversations that I found interesting and we’ll look forward to covering in more detail:

• Although the use of silicon carbide for microchips isn’t new, advancements from a number of semiconductor suppliers, including Fairchild, are poised to help reduce the size and scope of board level components in improving overall product performance.

• Ocular offered some insight into their standard and custom projected capacitive touchpanels. I found it interesting that standard sizes are offered despite the customized focus of many of these applications. However, the standard products could serve as a sort of defacto reference design for those looking to embed this type of technology.

• For those seeking some interesting support in the connector marketplace, Samtech’s Solutionator is definitely worth a look.

• Greenpeak, based out of The Netherlands, specializes in low-power RF fabless semiconductors for the Smart Home. The company’s plan is to start embedding their chips in cable set-top boxes and replacing the current infrared remote control functionality with RF. Then, they can approach device OEMs in working to embed the same technology into devices around the home used for controlling lighting, thermostat, entertainment, security, etc. So all these devices would be controlled and automated by the same device. The company feels it’s a smarter approach to automating the home and conserving energy without smart metering or involving utility companies. Right now, Greenpeak is targeting the U.S. and Asia because they both feature large cable service providers.

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