Apple to Develop IC Design Capability

Editor's Note: This makes a lot of sense for the iconoclast Apple, but the danger there is neglecting overall product development in the pursuit of the latest proprietary chip design. Apple is more known for what it does to the outside of the box than it is for what is does on the inside, so any increased utility and functionality in the hardware cannot be at the expense of the user interface and package design.

SAN FRANCISCO (Reuters) - Apple Inc is hiring new employees from the semiconductor industry and is building the capability to design its own chips, the Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday. The iPhone and iPod maker hopes its efforts will lead to new features for its devices and enable it to share fewer details about it plans with outside chip vendors, the report said, citing people familiar with Apple's plans.

An Apple spokesman confirmed the company has hired both Bob Drebin, former chief technology office of the graphics products group at chipmaker Advanced Micro Devices and Raja Koduri, who previously held the same position. The spokesman decline to comment further. Drebin's LinkedIn page lists him as a senior director at Apple. The hires were reported or rumored in a number of online outlets earlier in the week.

Apple has been hiring engineers to create multifunction chips that are used in cell phones, the Journal report said. Sources familiar with Apple's plans don't expect internally designed chips to emerge until next year at the earliest, it said. Last year, Apple acquired P.A. Semi, a designer of low-power microchips, in a move analysts said bolstered its ability to customize key parts for its iPhone, iPod and Macintosh product lines. Shares of

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