

# Microsemi<sup>®</sup> Corporation

## Online Properties Analysis and Recommendations

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an analysis of Microsemi® Corporation's (Microsemi) online presence followed by recommendations for how the company might develop it in 2012. Its goal is to provide a roadmap for building online properties that encourage design engineers to incorporate Microsemi parts into their circuit designs.

Note: All of the information gathered for this report came from publically available sources, including the company's website, news coverage, Facebook®, Twitter®, YouTube®, LinkedIn®, etc...

The report is divided into three sections:

- 1) Infrastructure: to determine the capacity of Microsemi's online properties to properly store, index, maintain and ultimately help deliver content to its customers.
- 2) Content: to determine the company's approach to digital publishing.
- 3) Recommendations: to make suggestions on how the company can best use its online properties to help electrical engineers design Microsemi's products into their circuits.

### Summary of Findings

- Multiple recent acquisitions have resulted in a "Frankenstein" website.
- Inconsistent navigational system makes it difficult to find content
- Deprecated SEO techniques are being used
- Content strategy is built on pleasing internal audiences rather than external engineers
- Some content is hidden behind forms, giving engineers an incentive to look elsewhere
- Bait & switch example may hurt Microsemi's reputation
- Use of social media "share" and RSS buttons without understanding how they work
- No official use of Twitter, Facebook, or YouTube. The channels that were built by acquired companies have been mothballed or deleted entirely.
- The company is risking its trademark by not securing its online namespace.

### Summary of Recommendations

- Implement a CMS to help engineers find the information that they need while being able to support the company's aggressive acquisition strategy.
- Create and publish content that is designed to help electrical engineers design Microsemi's products into their circuits
- Proactively protect the company's trademark by claiming its online namespace
- Adopt an open content philosophy, proving that Microsemi is a "...leading provider of semiconductor solutions..." as opposed to claiming it by decree.
- Use OpenGraph Protocol to support the company's choice to adopt social sharing buttons
- Create a series of technical blogs written by engineers for engineers
- Use Twitter for real-time communications and listening
- Create a series of "how to" and "demo" videos that learn from Actel's successful use of YouTube which has delivered 10,000 views of its videos.
- Participate in LinkedIn engineering group discussions.

- Support the DIY/Maker/M2M/Internet of Things/Open Source Hardware movement

## INFRASTRUCTURE

The heart of the company's online presence is its website, which is located at Microsemi.com. The site contains over 24,300 pages<sup>1</sup>—the majority of which are attributed to multiple catalogs of the company's vast collection of electronic components.

Although rich with datasheet information, the website's navigation is inconsistent, likely due to the company's successful acquisition of 26 companies in 19 years (12 of which have been completed in the past 3 years). The result is a "Frankenstein" website, that is packed with information, yet is difficult to find.

**Note:** We're confident that Microsemi knows all too well about its website issues. The intent of this report is to make recommendations that will help the company grow and serve its online audience.

The top three website issues that must be solved:

- 1) No Content Management System (CMS) that allows content to be easily published and maintained. The present site consists of pages written in a wide range of formats, such as HTML, Javascript, and PHP. The old Actel® site<sup>2</sup> uses .NET and the old Zarlink® site uses scripts from something called the "Dynamic Drive DHTML code library" (<http://www.dynamicdrive.com>)

Adopting a CMS will help solve four problems:

- a) Create a consistent navigation experience. For example, a search on the main Microsemi.com site for "solar power" yields a list of power components, while the same search on the old Actel site reveals press releases and events.
- b) Fix Broken links such as those found on the right-hand navigation menu of the Photovoltaic page, where 6 out of the 15 links bring a visitor to a page that says: "Access denied. You are not authorized to access this page."
- c) Bring acquired websites into the fold instead of giving them a facelift then bolting them haphazardly onto the present website.
- d) Add context to PDF documents: Although the website contains many applications notes and brochures, their PDF format causes problems for both website visitors (findability) and the company's web team (maintainability). The good news is that the documents look nice. The bad news is that PDF files are hard to maintain. Add the fact that some of the brochures date back to the year 2000—complete with images containing dated clothing, hairstyles, and technology—and we have a website that doesn't instill visitor confidence that it is up-to-date. By being able to tag content, context can be added to the search results, thus letting an engineer

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<sup>1</sup> <http://marketing.grader.com/site/www.microsemi.com>

<sup>2</sup> The old Actel site has a very good content management system (CMS) compared with the home, Microsemi.com site. Like Microsemi, it offers many Applications Notes in PDF format. The good news is that all notes have dates associated with them, so an engineer searching for information will be able understand context before downloading it. The CMS even supports Chinese and Japanese mirror sites.

know how old a document is before opening it.

- 2) No consistent cross-site Analytics: Although most of the web pages contain tracking codes, they differ...likely a remnant of acquired websites. For example, microsemi.com, the old Actel site and the old Zarlink site use three different Google Analytics® tracking codes. This makes it very difficult for the company to measure the overall effectiveness of its website.
- 3) No support for mobile devices. Millions of portable media devices (smartphones and tablet-based devices) are adding a “third screen” into our content consumption lives. Due to their smaller size, these devices require different website coding techniques. If Microsemi wants its site to be accessible by portable media devices, it must offer a mobile version of its website.

## Informational Design

The website is organized into six sections that are accessed through two competing navigation schemes: Large Print (*Products, Applications, Design Support, and What’s New*) and Small Print categories located in the upper menu bar (*Ordering and Company*):

- 1) Products: which contains the majority of the website’s content in the form of datasheets and brochures.
- 2) Applications: which contains eight<sup>3</sup> sub-sections: *Aerospace, Alternative Energy, Communications, Defense, Enterprise, Industrial, Medical, and Security*. However, only one of the eight (*Alternative Energy*) has content. The rest have “Coming Soon!” messages.
- 3) Design Support: which contains three sub-sections:
  - a) *Application Support*, which contains a submission form to request help
  - b) *Application Notes*, which contains a PDF library containing 153 Applications Notes divided into 17 categories.
  - c) *Product Brochures*, which contain 30 PDF brochures divided into 7 categories.
- 4) What’s New: which contains a list of press releases and the latest product announcements.
- 5) Ordering: which is curiously eliminated from the main window, making a visitor hunt to find it. Once found, however, it helps visitors locate and order parts from either Microsemi’s sales team or third-party vendors.
- 6) Company: which contains the standard *About Us, Corporate Contacts, Press, Quality, Acquisitions, Careers, Events, and Investors*.

The choice to name one of the main (Large Print) sections *Applications* may lead to visitor confusion, considering that the term also shows up as a subcategory of the *Design* section. As a main category, the term is being used as a substitute for “*Markets*.” However, considering that

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<sup>3</sup> In December, there were only four categories: “Aerospace, Defense & Security, Enterprise and Communications, and Industrial & Alternative Energy.”

each market can have its own design applications, (i.e. *RAD Hard/MIL spec* for the Aerospace market, and *energy generation, storage, and retrieval applications* for Alternative Energy) Microsemi may consider a simple word substitution. By replacing *Applications* (Large Print) with *Markets*, a visitor can distinguish between the industry that the product is used in and the specific application within that industry. Such a change may help streamline the navigation and support a content-creation strategy that's tailored for market-specific audiences.

## CONTENT

For the past 50 years, companies have built their communications activities around *outbound marketing strategies* that required the permission of third-parties to deliver their messages to the marketplace. Presently, Microsemi's marketing and public relations activities are consistent with this classic approach. However, recent advances in the ability to capture, store, and distribute (CSD) content digitally has challenged these activities, as both individuals and corporations now have the opportunity to publish their own content. No longer solely reliant on the audiences of third-party print & broadcast media, companies have the ability to start building their own audiences. Add the fact that these traditional media outlets are struggling to maintain their viewership<sup>4</sup>, and this new "ability" is rapidly becoming a "corporate necessity."

Early adopters of these new digital technologies used "inbound marketing strategies" such as Search Engine Optimization (SEO) techniques to influence their search engine rankings. Microsemi.com uses many of these techniques today, such as loading a web page with "keywords." However, after many years of corporations "gaming the system" through "black hat" SEO techniques, search engines have responded accordingly by changing their algorithms. For example, Google's PageRank® algorithm is seeking to index a very different kind of content and offers the following advice for website owners:

*Teach readers new things, uncover new news, be entertaining or insightful, show your expertise, interview different personalities in your industry and highlight their interesting side. Make your site worthwhile.*<sup>5</sup>

Rather than weighing their indices on what a company says about its own content (meta tags), search engines are now more interested in what others are saying about it. Today's search engines are using the *wisdom of crowds* to help index the world's best content, counting such things as the number of inbound links and the number of times someone seeks specific information and stops their search on a particular Web page. As a result, the metatags and description fields that Microsemi adds to all of its web pages now have very little effect on SEO.

## Analysis

The majority of Microsemi's content does not support Google's new PageRank algorithm. For example, instead of creating serial content that helps electrical engineers design Microsemi's components into their circuits, the majority of the website's content consists of static, aging applications notes, press releases and marketing brochures.

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<sup>4</sup> American Newspaper circulation subscriptions have fallen below their 1940s levels.

<sup>5</sup> <http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2008/10/good-times-with-inbound-links.html>

If Microsemi's goal is to create online properties that attracts design engineers, it must publish content specifically for them. Using Google's previously mentioned example, Microsemi needs to publish content that's helpful, entertaining, insightful, and shows its expertise—to engineers not journalists.

On a positive note, the website does contain some design-related information. Unfortunately, much of it is hidden behind walls. Although such a strategy may have worked well in the past, the widespread use of CSD technologies has altered website visitor behaviors. Those seeking product information today want instant access to it and they're perfectly willing to search elsewhere if it's not. In an information rich marketplace, customers are less likely to jump through artificial, company-centric hoops for access to the information that they need. And they won't tolerate the bait-and-switch tactics that Microsemi employs to access a simple webinar.

Take a look at the path a visitor must traverse in order to view the webinar called "Harness your Photovoltaic Solutions." After clicking on its hyperlink<sup>6</sup>, visitors are presented with the following message:

*To view this Webinar, please enter your email address and click Submit*

The statement implies that by submitting an email, visitors will be granted access to the webinar. However, instead of being rewarded with access, visitors are instead redirected to yet another hoop to jump through—one that requires them to complete a form containing 14 REQUIRED text fields!:

1. First Name
2. Last Name
3. Address
4. City
5. State
6. Zip Code
7. Phone Number
8. Industry
9. Organization
10. Job Title
11. Which PV area you most interested in?
12. What are the biggest design challenges that you are currently facing?
13. What functions, features or specifications that would help you get your product to market?
14. How did you hear about this webinar?

There are two significant problems with this scenario:

- 1) Bait & Switch leaves a bad impression: By clicking on the link, Microsemi is offering visitors a choice: to either trade an email address for access to the webinar, or pass and seek the information elsewhere. If the webinar is considered worth the price of an email address, visitors expect to pass through the gate. However, instead of gaining access after paying the price of admission, a new form pops-up, demanding more payment instead. The process is enough to leave those affected with a poor impression of Microsemi.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/956031152>

2) Hiding content hurts in two ways: By locking valuable information behind a form (in this case two forms), Microsemi has chosen to make it difficult for prospects to learn about the company's offerings, expertise, and industry leadership. Such a decision has two ramifications:

- a. Industry leader or laggard? At the beginning of every press release, Microsemi claims to be "...a leading provider of semiconductor solutions..." However, rather than demonstrating its leadership by actually offering solutions, the company's walled-content system establishes its leadership *by decree* rather than *by action*, thus opening the door for competitors who are willing to *lead by example*.

In an online world that is filled with information, walls typically keep people from seeking what's on the other side.

- b. Hidden content is not indexed: Content that is hidden from engineers is also hidden from search engines. Therefore, engineers searching for specific content will likely find a competitor's content first.

## The Good News

Although the bait & switch example is by far the worst found on the site, the experience isn't representative of all content found. For example, the document<sup>7</sup> and spreadsheet<sup>8</sup> that calculates the total cost of ownership for bypass diodes are excellent. Both documents meet the spirit of creating insightful and useful content that helps engineers make informed design decisions. In this specific case, they help engineers justify the higher initial costs of the Microsemi diodes.

The only thing that might make these pieces of collateral better is by combining the PDF file and the Excel spreadsheet into an online calculator that is written in something like PHP. Such a calculator would not only provide a tool that an engineer can link to (Google loves inbound links), but it would also serve as a way of gathering anonymous marketing data.

## Sharing

We've discussed the importance of inbound links on modern search engines. Specifically, the more external pages that link to a Microsemi Web page, the higher that page is likely to be ranked (SEO), which in turn should bring more people to the site. But just as companies were getting used to "inbound marketing" strategies, the popularity of relationship-based networks such as LinkedIn (35+ million users) and Facebook (800+ million users) created a new form of "outbound marketing." Through embedding standardized sharing buttons with odd-sounding names ("like," "recommend," "share," "tweet," or "+1"), businesses like Microsemi now have the ability to multiply the reach of their messages through relationship-based networks.

Since it's so easy to embed a "share" button into Web-based content, many companies are doing so without a strategy. Microsemi, falls into this category. For example, although the company's

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.actel.com/documents/Solar\\_Bypass\\_TCO\\_FAQ.pdf](http://www.actel.com/documents/Solar_Bypass_TCO_FAQ.pdf)

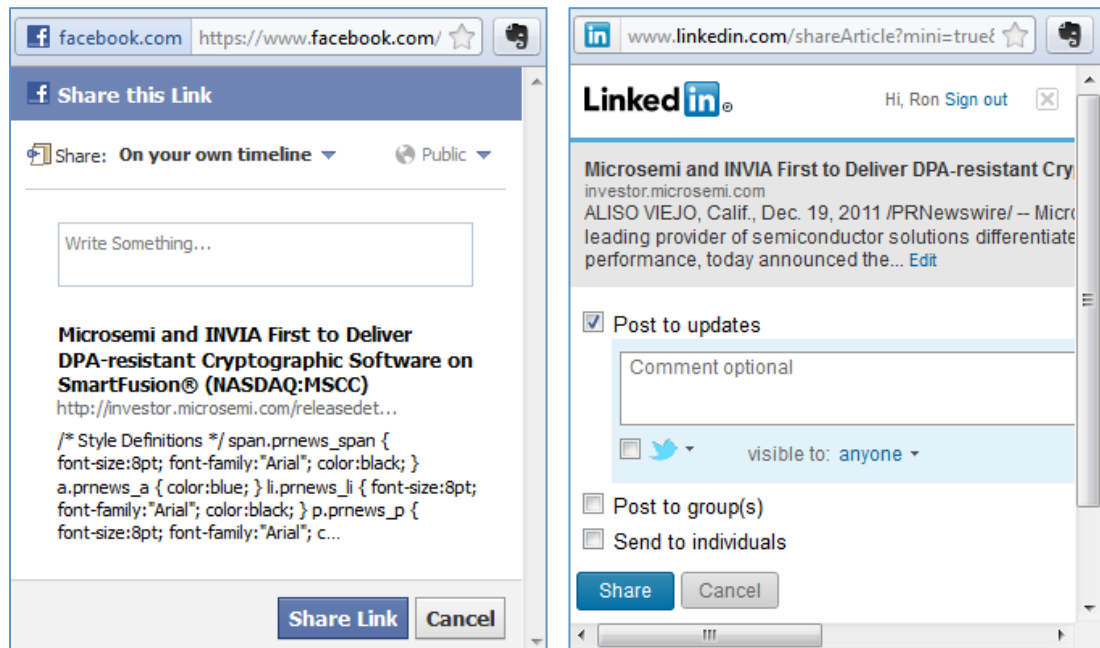
<sup>8</sup> [http://www.actel.com/documents/TotalCostofOwnership\\_Calculator.zip](http://www.actel.com/documents/TotalCostofOwnership_Calculator.zip)



press releases<sup>9</sup> employ the use of “share this” buttons, the downstream “shareability” of this content is largely hampered by two inhibitors:

1. **Technical Sharing Hurdle:** the website’s present coding style doesn’t support either present or emerging social tagging practices: such as description metatags or the OpenGraph protocol respectively.

To demonstrate, here’s the result of “shares” from a recent press release as seen through Facebook and LinkedIn:



In the Facebook example, the lack of a description tag causes Facebook to pick up gibberish. And although LinkedIn’s default choice is much more readable than its Facebook counterpart, its first paragraph default offers no incentive for someone to share that press release with their network. Both the “shareability” and click-worthiness” of Microsemi’s content would improve substantially by simply adopting the OpenGraph protocol for content tagging.

2. **Useful Content Strategy:** One of the best tests to determine the quality of online content is to ask if a visitor would send that content to a friend. In Microsemi’s case, would a systems engineer be more likely or less likely to share a piece of content with another engineer? Typically, engineers don’t read press releases, let alone share them. However, engineers actively share useful content that helps them design better circuits.

## External Channels

It doesn’t take too much digging on the Microsemi site to note the absence of third-party content channels such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc..., however, the lack of such channels is curious, considering that the company:

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<sup>9</sup> located on investor.microsemi.com

- recognizes some value in them, due to the decision to add “sharethis” buttons on its press releases.
- is attempting to use digital distribution technologies through the creation of RSS feeds for its press releases and SEC filings.

## Abandoned Properties

Although not officially sanctioned through links on the Microsemi.com site, it appears that some of the acquired companies once used external social channels—some which have been either abandoned or deleted entirely. For example, the video page linked to from the main Microsemi.com site<sup>10</sup> contains links to YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, although the accounts for Twitter and Facebook no longer exist.

But the YouTube channel does exist.<sup>11</sup> Opened by Actel on December 9, 2009, it contains 13 videos that have been viewed more than 10,000 times. Through the power of the Long Tail<sup>12</sup>, those videos are still being consumed today, even though a new video hasn’t been published to the channel in over nineteen months.

Why would Microsemi abandon a web property that has served technical content over ten thousand times?

Twitter: A search on Twitter has found three Twitter accounts with ties to Microsemi:

Twitter Handle	Tweets	Following	Followers	Listed	Last Tweet
@MicrosemiSOC	390	572	1325	102	July 8, 2011
@ZarlinkSemi	84	20	107	8	Oct 13, 2011
@PoE_PowerDsine	20	56	60	4	July 14, 2011

Just like the Actel YouTube channel case, it appears that all Twitter activity also halts after acquisition. For example, the last tweet from @ZarlinkSemi<sup>13</sup> on October 13, 2011 said:

*Microsemi Corporation announces successful completion of acquisition of Zarlink Semiconductor Inc.*

By abandoning these channels (corporate assets), the company cannot expect them to pay future communications dividends. For example, the @MicroSemiSOC<sup>14</sup> Twitter account (formerly some derivation of Actel) was created in September 2009. The account tweeted 390 times and had built an audience of 1325 followers. The account was producing content that was

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.actel.com/microsemi/videos/smartfusion\\_intro.html](http://www.actel.com/microsemi/videos/smartfusion_intro.html)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/actelcorp>

<sup>12</sup> The Long Tail, by Chris Anderson

<sup>13</sup> <https://twitter.com/#!/ZarlinkSemi/status/124473575854964737>

<sup>14</sup> Twitter allows its users to change the name of their accounts without affecting the audience that follows them. Therefore, someone at Actel must have changed the name of its original account to @MicrosemiSOC after the merger.

so valuable that various Twitter users had added it onto 102 Twitter lists. Unfortunately, all of the work that Actel has put into building this valuable communications asset is languishing.

## Defending Trademark

Independent of whether or not the company decides to use these various external channels in the future, Microsemi should, at a minimum, grab its online namespace:

Twitter: The handle “Microsemi” was registered by a “George Enfield” in 2009. It has not been used since. If George is a Microsemi employee, the password should be handed over to upper management. If not, the company should contact Twitter with a Trademark claim to secure it.

Facebook: The vanity URL “Microsemi” is available today and should be secured. The process is very simple, with only two requirements before facebook.com/microsemi may be claimed:

- create a Facebook Page
- get 25 people to “like” that page

YouTube: The YouTube channel<sup>15</sup>, “Microsemi,” displays the following message: “*This channel is no longer available because the user closed their account.*” At a minimum, a Microsemi representative should contact YouTube to see if the account can be both reinstated and issued to the trademark owner.

Protecting Microsemi’s namespace in the digital domain is one of the best ways to get ahead of potential mischief-makers.

## Social Media Myths

The term *social media* is one of the most overused words in marketing and PR today. It’s also the most misunderstood. Here are two myths about the corporate use of social media technologies:

### Myth #1: Social media isn’t for B2B companies

Conventional wisdom assumes that social media offers more value to B2C than B2B companies. The flawed conclusion comes from too much focus on the word “social” instead of the behavioral changes that CSD technologies have triggered in the way consumers find information and make purchasing decisions.

In fact, social media is easier for B2B companies, because B2B vendors know exactly who their customers are.

It is much easier to create content to solve the problems of systems engineers than it is to write content to solve the problems of generic soda drinkers.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/microsemi>

## Myth #2: Engineers don't use social media

This myth has its roots in the word “social” too. Rather than focusing on how people find and exchange purchasing information, many companies make the mistake of assuming that engineers aren't “social.” On the contrary, the earliest adopters of social platforms (bulletin boards, user forums, and list servers) were indeed engineers.

For example, [VerificationGuild.com](http://VerificationGuild.com)<sup>16</sup> is a user forum founded in 2006 to support ASIC verification engineers. It has 5365 registered electrical engineers who've contributed over 19,000 articles to it. Think about that from a corporate content-creation perspective. Verification Guild has an audience that consists of 5365 electrical engineers who distinguish themselves as verification specialists. These specialists gather on the site to share tips about the tools and technologies that help them do their jobs.

More recent uses of social media technologies are readily seen in the engineering community's use of blogs and wikis.

[The Design Automation Conference](http://TheDesignAutomationConference.com)<sup>17</sup> (DAC) promotes engineering bloggers on the front page of its website.

[EETimes](http://EETimes.com)<sup>®</sup> promotes 64 external (non journalist) engineering bloggers on its site<sup>18</sup>. Some of those bloggers are employees of large companies.

[SemiWiki.com](http://SemiWiki.com)<sup>19</sup>, launched in January 2011, has already gained an active membership that members who have contributed over 3000 posts to over 900 threads.

VerificationGuild and SemiWiki are designed to serve a very small, targeted, worldwide community of ASIC design engineers. [Element14.com](http://Element14.com)<sup>20</sup> on the other hand has expanded its reach to the much larger group of engineers. Designed by and for engineers, Element14 claims to have a worldwide audience of 75,000 engineers. In addition, the community is also supported by many sponsors<sup>21</sup>—including some of Microsemi's competitors.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://verificationguild.org>

<sup>17</sup> <http://dac.com>

<sup>18</sup> <http://eetimes.com/electronics-blogs/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://semiwiki.com>

<sup>20</sup> <http://element14.com>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.element14.com/community/community/suppliers>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings mentioned above, here are fourteen recommendations for Microsemi to consider:

- 1) Add a Content Management System(CMS): The present “Frankenstein” website is struggling to help systems engineers find the information that they need. The implementation of a CMS will help fix this problem, allowing the company to: organize and maintain all of its present information, give it the power to add new information, and offer a migration path for content that arrives via future acquisitions.
- 2) Publish Blogs written by and for engineers: Presently, Microsemi.com’s content strategy is upside down when compared with the new rules of search engines: a) it contains static content (doesn’t change) for systems engineers and dynamic content (constantly updated) for investors and the media. It’s time for Microsemi to start producing serial/dynamic content for systems engineers.

Many high tech companies are turning to their technical staffs to create content specifically for their customers. In the Electronic Design Automation industry, Synopsys® (6,700 employees/\$1.3B revenue) has 18 blogs<sup>22</sup>. Its rival, Cadence Design Systems® (5,600 employees/\$966M revenue) not only has 62 bloggers who write posts that fall into 13 categories, but it has very active user forums. On 01/20/2012, Cadence’s user forums reported 233,952 users who’ve published 92,464 posts. To get an idea on how active these forums are, consider that in 24 hours the system logged 66 new user registrations, 7 new conversation threads, and 37 new posts.

Most of Synopsys and Cadence’s bloggers come from the companies’ technical ranks, including applications engineers, product marketing, and customer support. And while most bloggers write as part of their jobs, Cadence and FPGA vendor Xilinx® have gone one step farther, hiring displaced journalists who used to cover their companies. Mike Santarini, writer for both EETimes and EDN, was hired by Xilinx in 2008 after he was laid off to become the Editor in Chief of Xilinx’s 21-year-old publication called Xilinx Journal. In April 2009, Cadence Design Systems hired Richard Goering after he was laid off from EETimes.

Not only will technical blogs help systems engineers design Microsemi components into their circuits, but the company will enjoy the side benefits of inbound marketing (Google PageRank) and the new outbound marketing (content distribution through third-party networks.)

- 3) At a very minimum, Microsemi needs an executive blog. If for some reason the company decides not to create serial content for systems engineers, at a bare minimum, it should have an executive blog that allows senior managers to publish content in their own words, rather than have those words interpreted through traditional media outlets. If, for example, a public relations emergency hits, without an established blog, the company is at the whim of the normal press release cycle to tell its story. With an established executive blog, the company has a platform from which to address important issues in a timely (possibly real-time) manner.
- 4) Build Stories around “Power Matters”: The website contains banners stating that “Power Matters,” yet when someone clicks to “Learn more,” the visitor is presented with traditional,

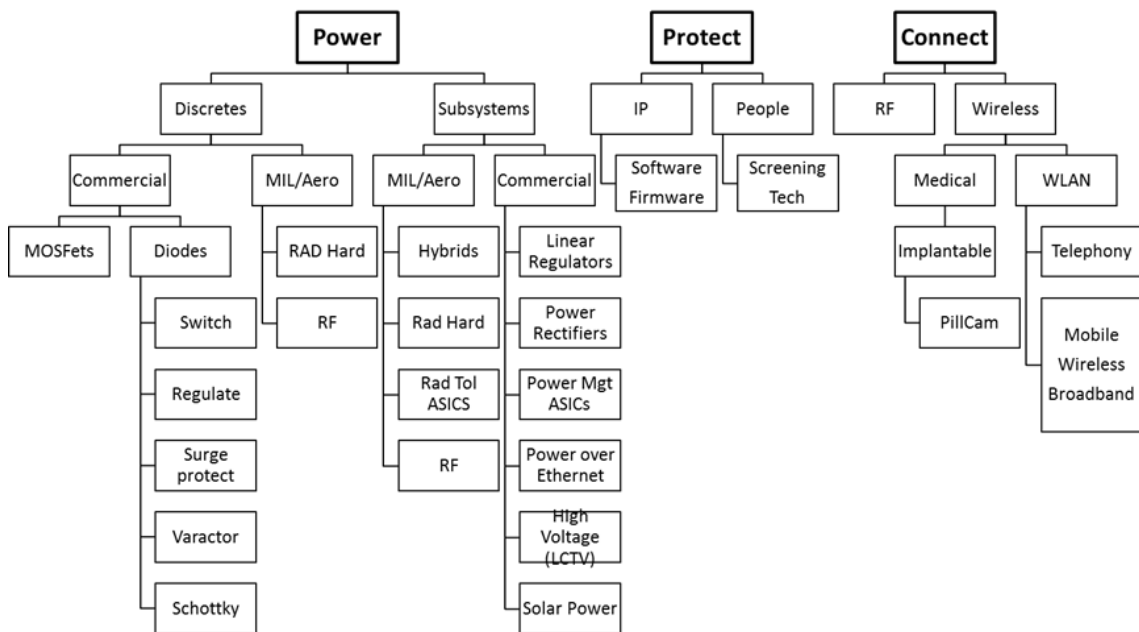
<sup>22</sup> <http://www.synopsys.com/Community/BlogsForums/Pages/default.aspx>

flowery, marketing-speak as opposed to useful content that actually answers the question of “Why Power Matters?” There is a great opportunity to build engineering-centric stories around the concept of *Why Power Matters* and what Microsemi brings as part of the solution.

- 5) Organize Content around “Secure, smart, and connected”: Microsemi’s mission statement contains a very compelling line: *...powering a secure, smart, and connected world.* Another section describes the company’s role as to *“power, protect, and connect our world.”* Both of these phrases offer exciting possibilities for both storytelling (content) and informational design (organization). For example, imagine if the company’s product offerings were organized, not around marketplaces, but in a way that aligns with its mission statement.

By organizing content around the company’s mission as opposed to the markets that it serves, it helps visitors find the information that they seek. If, for example, power engineers are looking for a RAD Hard Power FET, they may choose the following navigational path: Power/Discretes/Mil Aero/RAD Hard. A side benefit of such an organization is the ability to support the company’s acquisition strategy by rolling the new products into the existing tree.

The following illustration represents one way of organizing the website’s information to align with Microsemi’s mission statement.



- 6) Participate in LinkedIn Groups: Microsemi.com already has a LinkedIn Page that is followed by over 1900 people. The company uses the page predominantly for job recruiting, which is an excellent use of the network. But there are other uses for LinkedIn. Microsemi should seek LinkedIn groups where systems engineers gather. By becoming actively involved in these groups, Microsemi has the opportunity to live up to its assertion that it is “...a leading provider of semiconductor solutions...” By remaining on the sidelines, however, the company is leaving the door open for competitors to speak with them instead.
- 7) Add a Facebook Page with Vanity URL: Microsemi does not have a Facebook page. Although such a page isn’t the highest of priorities for 2012, at a minimum, a page should be created for no other reason to protect the vanity URL (facebook.com/microsemi). If Microsemi doesn’t consider Facebook as a viable space for systems engineers to gather, upper

management should at least consider using it to highlight some of the softer sides of the company, such as a place to highlight its philanthropic work. Such goodwill goes a long way in attracting investors, vendors, and ultimately recruiting great employees.

- 8) Add a YouTube Channel (Learning from Actel): YouTube.com is the world’s second largest search engine behind Google.com. One of the most popular video types is “how to” videos, where visitors look for content that helps them use products and services. Although Microsemi doesn’t yet have its own YouTube Channel, it can learn from Actel’s success.

Here is a breakdown of the views per video on the Actel YouTube channel:

VideoTitle	Views
SmartFusion Evaluation Kit Demo	1,864
Power Control Design demonstrates motor control solution using SmartFusion at ESC	1,844
SmartFusion FPGA Design Flow	1,085
SmartFusion Analog Design Flow Part 1 – Libero IDE project & ACE configuration	1066
Trinamic demonstrates motor control app using SmartFusion at ESC	987
Intelligent Power Management for SmartFusion	938
Introducing SmartFusion, the industry’s first intelligent mixed signal FPGA	679
SmartFusion Embedded Design Flow	536
Key Benefits of flash-based FPGAs	492
SmartFusion Analog Design Flow Part 2 – Voltage Monitor	337
Power Management in SmartFusion Intelligent Mixed Signal FPGAs	287
SmartFusion Analog Design Flow – Introduction	159
Smartgrid Technologies’ CTO, David Brain, presents SmartGrid demo using SmartFusion at ESC	140
<b>Total Views</b>	<b>10,414</b>

Let’s take a step backward and look at the data. Actel (Microsemi) has uploaded videos that were viewed over 10,000 times. The only cost associated with these videos was for their production. The cost for distributing them is zero. Since most of the videos were created by applications engineers, either recording screencast demos or interviewing people on tradeshow floors, the cost for each video comprises of the employee’s salary.

How much would it have cost Microsemi to pay someone to get their videos viewed 10,000 times?

It’s important to note that the production quality of the video has little to do with the actual number of views. For example, the highly produced (and likely most expensive) video *Introducing SmartFusion®, the industry’s first intelligent mixed signal FPGA* was viewed three times less (679/1864) than the low-budget (and poor audio quality) *SmartFusion® Evaluation Kit Demo*. Engineers don’t care about flashy graphics and velvety baritone voiceovers. Instead, they care about useful information that can help them solve their design problems. Period.

Social media channels such as YouTube are by far the most measurable of all media. They demonstrate what viewers like, what they don’t, and what they choose to ignore. Savvy digital content creators use this information to guide future content choices. By tailoring content to meet the needs of what prospects/customers are seeking, companies such as Microsemi can build loyal audiences.

The thirteen Actel videos also give us an opportunity to learn what is popular and what isn’t. A quick analysis reveals a potential demand for a series of *SmartFusion Demo* videos. Producing such a series would draw the attention of engineers who are seeking a flexible, low-cost, single-part, mixed-signal platform to build their applications upon.

- 9) Use Twitter for Real-time Communications: At first, Twitter looks like a waste of time. That's until companies understand that Twitter is all about time—real-time. Twitter gives companies the ability to communicate instantaneously. One of Twitter's most popular uses is at conferences, where companies let attendees know what is happening “now,” such as demos, keynote speeches, or live webinars. Conference attendees are also using Twitter. Through the use of hashtags, they are providing live commentary about their experiences. Those who follow those hashtags (companies, attendees, and even those who couldn't attend) are able to participate in the conference.

According to the Microsemi.com website, the company participates in many conferences. Twitter must be considered as a serious, real-time communications channel that the company can use to bolster its conference presence.

In addition, Twitter is also a very good listening device. Savvy companies use *search.twitter.com* (a search engine of tweets) to see what people are saying about them. Such information may include, live feedback from a Microsemi keynote speech, webinar, or simply overall impressions about the company's products and services. Twitter has become a place where prospects are asking real-time questions about products and services. As a result, if Microsemi continues to ignore this method of communication, it will not be able to engage with them, opening the door to a savvy competitor who will.

Lastly, Twitter is being used successfully by public relations professionals to build relationships with journalists. Since many journalists are now being measured by how many clicks their online articles are attracting, smart PR folks are helping journalists gain clicks by pointing followers to their articles. For example, if Microsemi wanted to help a journalist increase the number of clicks to a specific article, it could post a tweet to the 1325 people that follow @MicrosemiSoC. Such a show of good faith makes it much easier to approach a journalist when a PR story needs to be pitched.

- 10) Create a series of demo board videos. Tradeshows offer a great venue for creating video content, such as those released recently<sup>23</sup> filmed at a tradeshow about the Smart Fusion demo boards. The demo boards offer many storyline possibilities around solving specific problems. Rather than forcing prospects to watch demos that list feature after feature, the company should develop a video series of demos that solve very specific problems. Engineers love to learn from real-world examples!
- 11) Tell stories about Microsemi's involvement in Green/Sustainability: It was odd to find a company whose motto is “Power Matters,” who also has both a solar-power product line and RoHs compliant devices, but doesn't talk about its green/sustainability contributions. Many companies talk about being green, but their participation is tangential at best. Microsemi, on the other hand, helps engineers create green products! Why isn't the company taking advantage of this strength?
- 12) Mine Customers for Use Cases: Customers know more about a company's products and services than the actual manufacturer, simply because they use them every day. Such field knowledge is gold from a content-creation perspective. Perhaps a customer is using a product in a novel way or has developed a new design methodology around it. Perhaps a Microsemi product has helped them solve one of their most nagging problems. Such stories form the basis for content that can take any digital form, such as a blog post, video interview, or the starting point for a new demo that an applications engineer can polish and record.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnbleU6mWg>



- 13) Support the DIY/Maker/M2M/Internet of Things/Open Source Hardware movement: Rapid advances in technology fueled by open communications is opening up the world of engineering to millions of tinkerers. The movement, known to some as *DIY* and as *Makers* to others, is attracting designers from all walks of life to build a wide range of things, from robots to flying drones, clothing that takes our blood pressure, to radiation sensors that are providing real-time images of the radiation cloud over Fukushima, Japan. Open source hardware, the Internet of Things, and machine-to-machine (M2M) communications are opening a totally new world of innovation. As one of the largest producers of electronic components, Microsemi has the ability to become a leader in this space, by helping produce content that fuels this growing demand.
- 14) Consider Philanthrotizing: Philanthrotizing is a term that involves redirecting budgets normally focused on advertising and marketing to directly helping nonprofit organizations. The goal is to match a need with the skills of the company in order to help a nonprofit achieve its mission. A successful relationship creates goodwill, which is spread through the medium of storytelling. Facebook is a great place to consider telling philanthrotization stories.

## WRAP-UP

Microsemi possesses the building blocks for a successful digital content strategy. The fact that the company serves a highly technical audience makes it easier to identify content creation needs. But, there are some things that the company must do to become a successful digital publisher:

- Take it one step at a time: Although there are many things that Microsemi must do to establish itself as the “go-to” source of engineering content, they don’t need to be completed all at once. The tasks can be prioritized and completed in phases.
- Implement a content management system
- Use social share buttons and RSS feeds strategically: Microsemi is presently using social sharing technologies without a strategy.
- Don’t dismiss acquired properties. Use them instead: Through its acquisitions, Microsemi has had some success with social platforms such as YouTube and Twitter. However instead of leveraging that success, those platforms have been mothballed. While dormant, these platforms still have their audiences (Twitter: 1200 followers, YouTube: 66 subscribers and 10,000 views) that can be built upon.
- Use social channels to reduce business risk: The decision to ignore social channels increases risk in three different ways:
  - Impersonation: By refusing to grab the username “Microsemi” on Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook, the company is at risk of someone else taking and using them.
  - An opportunity for competitors to poach: Microsemi’s choice to avoid social publishing platforms opens a complementary risk caused by not listening to them. Without the ability to publish, the company has no ability to respond to questions directed toward the company. The void creates opportunities for competitors to engage with these prospects/customers/journalists instead.

- Platform to speak directly and unfiltered to an audience: Microsemi's only capacity to respond in an emergency is through the press. A senior management blog will give the company the ability to respond in its own words, rather than having those words filtered through the press.
- Create content that delights engineers rather than internal audiences and journalists.

The adoption of these recommendations will not be easy because they require a controversial shift away from the traditional business communications strategies that have served companies so well during the Golden Age of print and broadcast. However, with advances in CSD technologies allowing anyone to become a digital publisher with access to ubiquitous networks that can spread that content for free, the rules have changed.

Microsemi has the opportunity to build online properties that encourage design engineers to incorporate Microsemi parts into their circuit designs. All it needs to do is start creating serial content specifically for them.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ron Ploof helps companies use modern publishing tools to communicate directly with their customers rather than relying solely on third-party audiences of print, broadcast and trade shows. He brings a unique mix of technical and business skills to his clients through a combination of his BSEE degree, 25 years of high-tech electronic design experience as an analog/mixed signal design engineer, applications engineer, and business development manager for ASIC design services. In addition to these skills, his experience as a published author, blogger, public speaker, podcaster, and digital storyteller adds a creative twist rarely found in nerdy electrical engineers.

Ron is the author of "Read This First: The Executive's Guide to New Media," numerous case studies, and his recently released e-book entitled "The Rule of Thumbs." Ron has been blogging at RonAmok.com since 2007, and is @ronploof on Twitter.

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