



FTR THE FINAL
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The BiTS Workshop, held in Mesa, AZ from March 11 to 14, is, according to Fred Taber, its founder and chairman, “the only one of its kind dedicated to chip test and burn-socketing and related technologies.” This year’s workshop attracted over 360 attendees to two tutorials – (*ATE PC Board Design* by Steve Arobio, COO of Dynamic Test Solutions and *Critical Issues in IC Packaging* by Charles Cohn, Sr. Analyst at TechSearch) and 25 presentations on socketing and related topics. It also featured an EXPO with 58 exhibitors.

BiTS is arguably the 'son of Bill Mann's SWTC', and like that workshop all of its sessions and activities are informal and casual and organized to promote informal discussions and networking with extended breaks, receptions and social activities.

This year’s keynote speaker was Steve Appleton, chairman/CEO/president of Micron Technology who discussed *The impact of New Applications and Increasing Device Complexity on the Future of Testing*. He focused his talk on “the dichotomy between a device’s actual lifetime, and its tested life expectancy.” He argued that “historically, simulation and theoretical testing have been crucial to ensuring the integrity of a product. Industry standards dictate that some products be life-cycle tested to last 100 years.” This is a costly process, may be unnecessary, and is based on an old concept”.

Appleton added that at Micron test is becoming a smaller percentage of manufacturing costs “due to a different mindset.” He argued that if a product isn’t expected to last 100 years, why spend the money testing it to make sure if it does? Most consumer devices are replaced after just a few years, and sometimes months. It’s more realistic to ensure a product can last 1.5 to 2 years”.

Appleton claims that, “If you don’t know what application a device is going into, that’s when you test it to standard specifications.”

The workshop’s Invited Speaker was Steven Strauss – no stranger to



Steven Strauss

as he was its Key-note speaker at the 2002 BiTS conference when he was Intel’s Test Tooling Operation Manager. He now is VP of Engineering at Antares Advanced Test Technologies, formed last July by the merger of Antares conTech (previously part of K&S’ test group) and UMD Advanced Test Technologies.

In an address entitled *From the Frying Pan into the Fire; Working on Both Sides of the Tooling Supply Chain*, he discussed his experiences in moving from being a consumer of test technology and test tooling at one company to supplying the test tooling needs for many customers.

He admitted that “This experience in the role of supplier has been a learning experience. Coming from the top of the food chain with my previous employer, I was not accustomed to the high level of competition and being in a position where we needed to prove our worthiness and battle for business. I was used to customers coming to us for business and being highly selective in what business we engaged in.

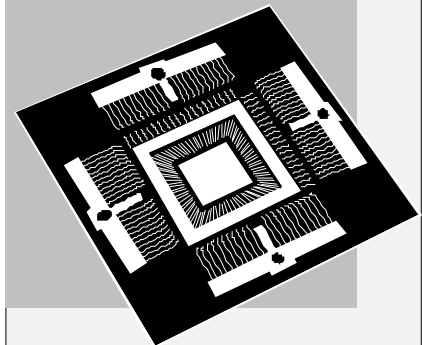
As a supplier, all customers are important, no matter what the size of opportunity you are faced with. As long as we have the capability and capacity to provide a solution, we will take it on. The glaring issue associated with levels of scale and the difference in the size of companies was drastically different. When looking at the industry’s test tooling supply chain, I realized that this was a dramatic disparity, and [at Intel] we were at the top of the hill. The glaring disparity in the scale of size from my previous employer to my current employer has been “eye opening.”

I can only imagine the disparity for other, smaller organizations, as they battle to stay on top of the technical hurdles that are continuously evolving in this industry.

In the test tooling supply market working closely with suppliers is not the common practice it was at Intel. Many customers keep suppliers at arms length, do not share roadmaps, do not partner with them. Their standard-operating procedure is to ask for solutions, vaguely define the requirements, expect effective solutions in very sort order, at prices that cannot be fathomed by the supplier. Innovation will drive the growth of the semiconductor industry.” Strauss concludes that, “Customer and supplier partnerships will generate innovation, and it is innovation that will drive lower test costs and improved time-to-market.”

The BiTS 2007 presentations will be posted in May 2007 on its Web page at www.bitsworkshop.org.

ATE/DFT MEETINGS



June 4-6, 2007

IEEE SW Test Workshop
Paradise Point Resort
San Diego, CA
www.swtest.org

June 4-8, 2007

44th Design Automation Conference (DAC 2007)
San Diego, CA Convention Ctr
www.dac.com

July 17-19, 2007

SEMICON West 2007
Moscone Center
San Francisco, CA
<http://semiconwest.semi.org/>