electronica 2012 Promotes Greater Connectivity, Immense Power

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I'm at the midway point during my first trip to electronica and it 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; and challenging (to my body) with the amount of beer consumption.

Some common themes from the suppliers and distributors I've visited include energy efficiency, which isn't a new focal point, but the levels at which they're looking to take it are inspiring and aggressive. 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. The company stated that 56 percent of total sales, and 75 percent of EU sales, occur online. The distributor also announced some new developments surrounding the ever-popular Raspberry Pi platform, which the company has sold 150,000 of since February 2012. The company will soon launch PiView, which enables a cable connection to a VGA monitor and WiPi [1], bringing WiFi capabilities to the board.
- An interesting development from Maxim included a closer look at its 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 the automotive industry 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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[1] http://www.newark.com/element14/wipi/dongle-wifi-usb-for-raspberry-pi/dp/07W8938