AMD Hires Chip Veterans, Diversifies Beyond PCs

Reuters

Advanced Micro Devices Inc has hired two senior engineers with experience at Qualcomm Inc and Apple Inc, its latest high-level recruitments as it diversifies beyond a slowing personal computer industry, sources close to the chipmaker said.

Charles Matar, with expertise in low-power and embedded chip design, joined as AMD's vice president of System-on-Chip Development, two sources said. Matar most recently worked at Qualcomm.

Wayne Meretsky, who has worked at Apple on processors used in the iPad and iPhone, was named vice president, software IP development, they said. Meretsky will lead software developments for AMD's chips.

AMD spokesman Drew Prairie also confirmed that AMD hired the two engineers to help the chipmaker expand into new markets, but he did not provide details.

AMD depends on the PC industry for about 80 percent of its revenue. With sales in that business falling due to a growing preference for smartphones and tablets, the company is rushing to expand into new markets for its chip processors and graphics technology.

One of Silicon Valley's oldest chipmakers, AMD has experienced major changes in its lineup of executives and senior engineers since Chief Executive Rory Read moved over from PC maker Lenovo in 2011 promising to make the struggling chipmaker more efficient.

In October, AMD announced it was laying off 15 percent of its workforce, its second round of job cuts in less than a year.

Matar and Meretsky both worked at AMD earlier in their careers. Their return follows chip guru Jim Keller, who joined AMD as chief architect in August last year.

Keller was previously a director at Apple in charge of designing mobile processors used in the iPad and iPhone.

Sunnyvale, California-based AMD hopes to increase sales in markets such as communications, microservers, digital signs and stripped down "thin client" computers. It wants those non-PC markets to account for as much as 50 percent of its revenue within three or four years.

Matar will focus on designing SoCs, or "system on a chips", which integrate several features found on a computer into a single piece of silicon. The technology is widely used in smartphones, tablets and embedded devices.

The chipmaker plans to ship a new low power processor, codenamed Temash, for tablets and hybrid laptops running Microsoft's Windows 8 platform in the first half of this year.

Its Kabini laptop processor, also planned for early 2013, will have 50 percent better performance than its predecessor, according to AMD.

(Reporting by Noel Randewich and Richard Chang)

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