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Creative Best Practices Emerging Platforms Opinions Social Media Targeting Websites Wireless Word of Mouth

Getting the Skinny on Mobile Device Design Issues and Opportunities

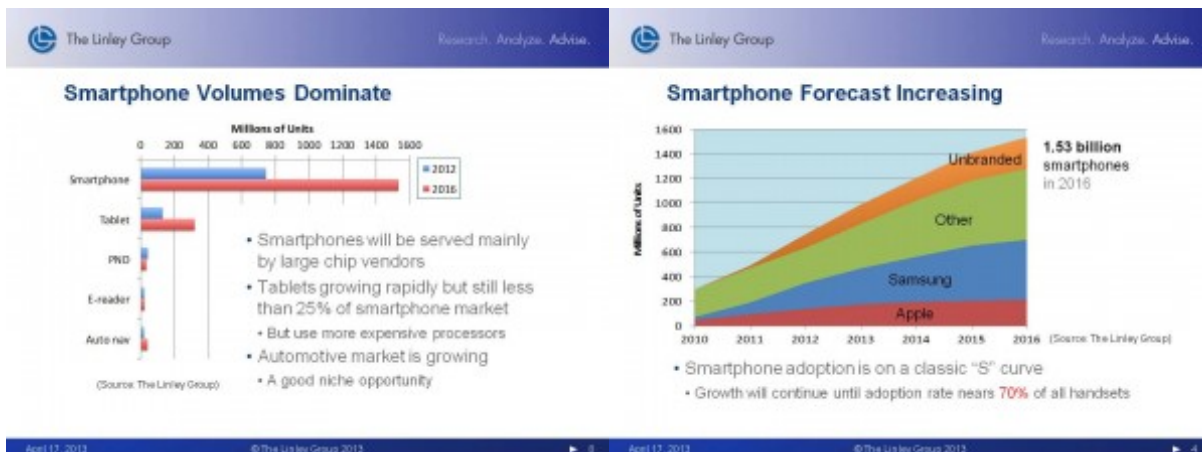Tweet   Like   2   G+1   0   Share

Posted by Neal Leavitt on April 23rd, 2013 at 4:15 pm

Market research firms sponsor literally hundreds, if not thousands of conferences around the globe. While one key objective, understandably, is to directly or subliminally promote the firm's products/services, the topics will hopefully be both educational and informative and attract attendees, keynote speakers, and panel participants who are well regarded in their respective fields and bring added value.

A good example is the recently concluded Linley Tech Mobile Conference, held last week in Santa Clara, CA and organized by Mountain View, CA-based The Linley Group, a market research firm providing independent technology analyses of semiconductors for networking, communications, mobile, and wireless applications. The company also produces a trade publication, *Microprocessor Report*.

This was the fourth year the event was held; according to company founder and Principal Analyst Linley Gwennap, the conference attracted about 200 people, including those from mobile IP and chip companies, handset and other device vendors, carriers and software vendors, as well as the financial community and press. Attendees represented a broad range of companies, including Broadcom, China Mobile, Cisco, Dell, Ericsson, HP, Huawei, Imagination Technologies, Marvel, Samsung and Sony, as well as financial analysts from Bank of America, Credit Suisse, UBS, and Wells Fargo.

The conference focused on a wide array of topics; here's a snapshot:

• Heterogeneous processing
• Licensable CPUs for mobile devices
• Licensable GPU and DSP cores
• Mobile semiconductors
• Mobile SoC design issues
• Mobile software trends
• Multicore application processors
• Other low-power IP cores

The presentations addressed design issues for mobile devices -- tablet computers, smartphones, navigation devices, media players, handheld games, and e-book readers.

One of the conference highlights, noted Gwennap, was a panel on the growing China mobile market, featuring executives from China Mobile, Imagination Technologies, MediaTek and Spreadtrum. The panel addressed key challenges and opportunities for mobile products in China, the diverging demands of Chinese consumers and the different tiering in that enormous market. One interesting takeaway: the total available market for mobile handsets in China is larger than the entire population of the United States!

Another session on mobile CPUs talked about major issues for mobile product development. One of the panelists, Mark Throndson, serves as Director of Processor Technology Marketing for UK-based Imagination Technologies.

One of Throndson's conclusions was that industry trends are forcing more efficiency in how companies build

products, and to enable this, new technologies are abstracting software development away from the underlying hardware/instruction sets.

"At the end of the day, even though software is becoming less dependent on the hardware it runs on, good underlying architectures are still important as they affect the user experience through delivering high performance, longer battery life, and lower costs," said Throndson.

Another interesting session focused on power-optimized design. This is an increasing challenge as today's mobile devices integrate ever-more features and functionality, yet battery technology hasn't kept pace. A couple of session participants proposed that the answer lies in adding a bit more complexity in hardware to handle power management. While this additional logic may consume some power, the end result, according to these panelists, is increased efficiency and longer battery life.

I've been to gobs of analyst-driven events that focused too much on promoting the market research firm and its offerings; the buzz on the Linley gathering from attendees is that it was two days well-spent.

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