Xcell journal

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A Shortcut to Success

This issue of the *Xcell Journal* features a very cohesive collection of articles about electronic system level (ESL) design. ESL is an umbrella term for tools and methods that allow designers with software programming skills to easily implement their ideas in programmable hardware (like FPGAs) without having to learn traditional hardware design techniques. The proliferation of these tools will make it easier for designers to use programmable devices for algorithm acceleration, high-performance computing, high-speed packet processing, and rapid prototyping.

In an effort to organize those vendors developing ESL products, in March 2006 Xilinx launched the ESL Initiative, inviting companies such as Celoxica and Impulse Accelerated Technologies to optimize support for Xilinx® embedded, DSP, and logic platforms and to establish common standards for ESL tool interoperability, among other goals.

Xilinx also set its own standards for participation in the ESL Initiative. To qualify as a partner, a company's ESL methodologies must be at a higher level of abstraction than RTL. They must also demonstrate a working flow for FPGAs and position their tools as an FPGA solution rather than an ASIC solution that also happens to work with FPGAs. Participants were additionally invited to write an article for this issue.

We also invited *FPGA Journal* Editor Kevin Morris to share his thoughts about ESL, and as you'll see he offers quite a interesting perspective. Depending on who you talk to, ESL is either all hype or the real deal. At Xilinx, we've committed to this promising technology – working with a variety of vendors (12 and growing) whose solutions are designed for a variety of applications.

I invite you to learn more about ESL and particularly each company's respective products by delving further into this issue of the *Xcell Journal*, or by visiting *www.xilinx.com/esl*.

Forrest Couch
Publisher