

Norcott EMS builds collaborative partnership with chip designer

Norcott EMS (Norcott) has played a key role in helping Spanish semiconductor design company, DS2, carve out a sizable slice of the Power Line Communications (PLC) market.

Its design, assembly and logistical expertise helped DS2 develop and manufacture the reference boards which proved its chips' suitability for use in a wide range of network adaptors, modems and consumer electrical goods.

PLC technology allows broadband communications to be delivered via electrical power cables providing viable delivery for triple-play service (voice, internet video) thus representing a rapidly growing market. Consequently, DS2 is under significant pressure to invest in new chip set designs whose functionality must then be proved to customers using reference board designs. These often have to be delivered to customers on very short lead times.



Realising it did not have the time or expertise to produce these small to medium sized batches of prototypes, DS2 began the search for a partner manufacturer, which it found in PCB specialist, Norcott. It could not only assemble high quality reference boards to tight deadlines and manage DS2's component logistics, but crucially it could also provide best practice advice on their design.

Norcott managing director, Pete Lomas, comments: "Fundamentally, we saw this project as being an opportunity for both companies to complement one another. As a chip designer DS2 had neither the time nor resource to get its reference board designs right on its own. Being specialists in PCB design and assembly, however, we were able to look at DS2's designs as they came in and suggest areas for improvement.

"Engaging in this kind of dialogue allowed us to perfect the designs, improve the reliability of the product and greatly increase yield. It also meant we were able to forge a close and fruitful working relationship, which we enjoy to this day."

The success of this relationship can also be seen in how widely DS2 products have since been adopted. The company's PLC chip sets are now integral components in many consumer appliances, notably those distributed by Spanish-based telecoms giant Telefonica.

Pete adds: "The collaborative relationship Norcott and DS2 is now far reaching, and we have been able to build on what we accomplished in readying its first and second generation technology for market, laying solid foundations for the development of subsequent generations of chip sets.

“We are always ready to work with innovation-led, results focused companies such as DS2 and are delighted to have played a part in their success.”

DS2’s Jose Manuel Marí concludes: “I believe Norcott's support was crucial for DS2 in the early stages of the company. Its at-hand (and sometimes on-site) support provided us with the necessary guidelines to turn a line of prototype modems into a line of ready-to-market manufacturable products.

“Ever since, and throughout the different sets and generations of PLC modems, Norcott has ensured that DS2 modems meet the level of quality required by OEM manufacturers, volume assemblers and end customers.”