

EE Times: Semi News
ARM's chairman calls for collaboration

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SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — The old methods for product design and development do not scale in an era when market windows are shrinking rapidly and electronics markets are being driven by fashion and style, according to Robin Saxby, chairman of ARM Holdings plc.

Delivering a keynote address at the 9th Annual Semico Summit here Monday (March 13), Saxby said solving present and future yield challenges requires collaboration between intellectual property (IP) vendors, EDA tool suppliers and chip makers.

"The only way we resolve these issues as an industry is we have to work together," Saxby said. "We need collaboration and standards. We need to share information and knowledge."

Saxby said the industry must develop standards to represent fab process data while at the same time protecting sensitive information — data that a company considers its competitive advantage, or "crown jewels."

Collaboration leads to competitive advantage through lower costs and higher profits, Saxby said. Companies, Saxby said, must determine what business and technology area or areas provide them with a competitive advantage and collaborate on all other areas.

Saxby said digitization and "non-intrusive technology" will create new markets for semiconductors starting in around 2015. The theme of non-intrusive technology, defined by Saxby as technology that powers products but is not necessarily the focus of product market efforts, emerged as a key theme in the address. He cautioned against the tendency to market technology as a feature and put it "in the face" of consumers.

"Consumers want technology to be invisible," Saxby said. "They don't want to have to be a geek or a nerd to use [a product]."

Saxby noted a lack of cohesiveness among semiconductor industry players with regard for defining design-for-manufacturing and design-for-yield terms and methodologies. "There isn't one unified view of a definition of what all of this stuff is," he said. "It's something we are going to resolve over time."

With product lifecycles and market windows shrinking, Saxby said, the need for concurrent hardware/software development will drive the industry toward electronic-system level design. Software development, he said, needs to use more IP and re-use more code. In the future, he said, the semiconductor companies that work best with software will have the best chance to succeed.

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