

SMSC Sets Camera Phone Images Free with Infrared

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Looking to create an easy and inexpensive way to transfer photos from cell phones to PCs or other devices, SMSC is introducing a device that offers USB-to-infrared and 15-in-1 flash media conversion.

The USB2230 "sets free" all the photos that are trapped in digital cell phone cameras by being the first in the industry to combine flash media and infrared technology.

"Cell phone cameras have expanded the boundaries of digital photography," said Morry Marshall, VP of strategic technologies at analyst firm Semico Research, in a statement.

"However, many consumers don't know how to download the photos from their camera phone, so the pictures are shown to friends or family and then erased," he added. "Downloading requires a connecting cable, too challenging and cumbersome, or a telephone data connection, too slow and expensive. The SMSC infrared solution, combined with a flash card reader provides a simple, speedy, intuitive connection, point and download, which should find a ready market."

By providing both a flash memory reader and IrDA transfer support, designers can provide consumers with a common interface point to meet most of their digital photography needs. By putting both technologies onto a single chip, the device speeds time-to-market and reduces costs. SMSC estimates the device can drive down costs by 60 percent for hardware alone.

In addition, the devices adds a wireless format to USB flash card readers for users of digital still cameras.

"While all markets demand better, faster, cheaper solutions, nowhere does that ring more true than in designing consumer electronics products," said Steve Nelson, VP of marketing connectivity solutions at SMSC, in a statement.

"Our focus has always been to deliver the most appropriate technologies that solve today's design problems, specifically addressing designers' stringent cost, standardization and ease-of-use requirements," he said. "By continually expanding what's possible, we are enabling our customers to design products that allow end-users to connect to the information that means the most to them, quickly, easily and intuitively."

The USB2230 device controller can be integrated into PCs, photo kiosks, TVs, set-top boxes, printers or other receiving devices that will allow consumers to send pictures wirelessly. Compared with other wireless solutions, infrared is a convenient, low-power and low-cost technology with over a half billion nodes installed in the world today, according to the Infrared Data Association. This lets consumers use infrared transfers for free instead of paying 25 cents to 50 cents per picture via a cellular network.

The USB2230 is sampling now and production quantities will be available in June.

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