



IR controller targets camera phone duties

Setting free over billions of digital camera phone images is no easy task, but now consumers can have a simple, cost-effective alternative for transferring images to their PCs or media devices.

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SMSC has unveiled its USB2230 USB-to-infra-red and 15-in-1 Flash media device controller.

This industry-first solution combines Flash media and infra-red technology, enabling designers to deliver a simple point-and-shoot experience.

Consumers can now easily and affordably transfer digital images from their camera phones and other Infrared Data Association (IrDA) enabled devices in a manner consistent with how they transfer images from their digital still cameras (DSCs).

'Cellphone cameras have expanded the boundaries of digital photography', said Morry Marshall, Vice President of Strategic Technologies, Semico Research Corp.

'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'.

'Downloading requires a connecting cable, too challenging and cumbersome, or a telephone data connection, too slow and expensive'.

'The SMSC infra-red solution, combined with a Flash card reader provides a simple, speedy, intuitive connection, point and download, which should find a ready market'.

Designers of products interfacing with camera phones are faced with consumers requiring more control over time and content, and by providing both a Flash memory reader and IrDA transfer support, consumers will now have a common interface point to meet most of their digital photography needs.

As camera phones continue to outsell DSCs and move to 1.0Mpixel and beyond, IrDA provides an ideal user experience that is intuitive and secure.

The alignment of Flash media and infra-red onto a single chip addresses the issues of time and cost by saving not only months in engineering time associated with software integration, but can also drive down costs by nearly 60% in hardware alone.

'While all markets demand better, faster, cheaper solutions, nowhere does that ring more true than in designing consumer electronics products', said Steve Nelson, Vice President of Marketing - Connectivity Solutions at SMSC.

'Our focus has always been to deliver the most appropriate technologies that solve today's design problems, specifically addressing designers' stringent cost, standardisation and ease-of-use requirements'.

'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'.

Although the ability to send pictures from cameras to TVs has been around for some time, it has usually meant dealing with special cables and has not been readily accepted by consumers.

However, designers can now integrate the USB2230 device controller 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, infra-red is a convenient, low-power and low-cost technology with over a half billion nodes installed in the world today, according to the IrDA.

Instead of paying \$0.25 to \$0.40 per picture via a cellular network, the USB2230 allows developers to provide a choice of beaming their pictures wirelessly to PCs, printers or other IrDA-enabled devices for free.

Delivering datarates of up to 4Mbit/s using the industry-standard IrDA Fast Infrared (FIR) protocol, SMSC's USB2230 controller is capable of sending a VGA-quality image from a camera phone or PDA in about 3s.

The USB2230 controller is capable of running both a USB-to-IrDA connection and a USB to Flash media card connection over a single USB port.

The use of USB2.0 connection allows the device to be placed up to 5m away from the host system board, enabling a new level of flexibility in product mechanical design and embedded software integration.

Samples of the USB2230 are available now with production quantities available in June.

Pricing will be \$4.99 per unit (US list price) in 10,000-unit quantities.