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Company Backgrounder

Executive Summary

SpringSoft, Inc. is a global supplier of Electronic Design Automation (EDA) software to the semiconductor and electronic systems industries. The Company is listed on the Taiwan Stock Exchange (TSE: 2473) and is one of two large publicly traded EDA companies in Asia. SpringSoft's dual headquarters are in Hsinchu, Taiwan, and in San Jose, California. It has more than 400 employees worldwide.

SpringSoft specializes in providing unique automation technologies that save engineers time in the design and verification of integrated circuits (ICs). SpringSoft sells its EDA solutions to the world's leading companies that make semiconductor products and systems based on them (such as computers, telecommunications and IT equipment, mobile devices, automotives, medical equipment, etc.).

Mission and Strategy

SpringSoft's dual headquarters and global network of sales and support personnel not only position the Company to address the fast growing markets in China and India but also allows it to maintain and grow its strong foothold in the US and Europe. This strategy also allows SpringSoft to provide excellent customer service on a global scale.

SpringSoft's unique automation technologies save time at several particularly complicated and difficult steps in the IC design process. The Company's product strategy focuses on critical design tasks involved in 1) understanding and verifying the correctness of a design's logic and 2) implementing the physical design layout.

Complex IC design requires a high degree of collaboration and compatibility across EDA tools and related technologies, and SpringSoft has established itself as a leader in this area. Its Harmony third-party community includes more than 65 partners who work with the Company to ensure tight integration and compatibility among their products. SpringSoft is also a strong supporter and active participant in the development of industry standards which improve designer efficiency and tool interoperability, such as SystemVerilog, SystemC, OpenAccess and Interoperable PDK Libraries.

Company History

SpringSoft was founded in 1996 in Taiwan by Martin Lu, Johnson Teng and Jerry Wang. The original team was part of the R&D operations of ECAD Systems in the 1980s, which upon merging with SDA Systems became Cadence Design Systems. The founders launched SpringSoft first by doing contract engineering work and by offering distribution for other EDA suppliers into the Taiwan market.

The team's initial product development focus was on debugging, an important but often overlooked (by EDA suppliers) step in the design process. Debug tools help engineers understand design behavior and the causes of errors revealed by verification tools. The founders of SpringSoft developed the Debussy® Debug System, which vastly improved the efficiency of finding errors. They marketed it as a standalone tool that worked with all the major verification tools available from the larger EDA suppliers.



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Soon after, SpringSoft also began development of the Laker™ Custom Layout System for IC layout solution. As with debugging, IC layout has become a very complex and painstaking process, requiring sophisticated software to automate what are virtually impossible tasks for humans to perform manually. And as with its debug solution, SpringSoft's engineers invented unique technology to cope with the complexities.

In order to break into markets outside Taiwan, SpringSoft created a unique business model by setting up independent companies to market and distribute its products in North America and Europe. For its debug products, it established Novas Software, Inc. in 1997, which had the responsibility of marketing, selling and supporting the Debussy system. Soon after starting Novas, SpringSoft established Silicon Canvas to market, sell, and support the Laker system. A third company, Novaflow, was set up in Japan in 2000, as a distributor for both the verification enhancement and custom IC design products. Springsoft later backed another company, ForteLink, which was developing hardware-assisted verification technology. These companies acted autonomously with their own management teams and boards. Novas later helped develop the second generation debug product, the Verdi™ Automated Debug System, as well as the Siloti™ Visibility Automation System. Novas also went on to be recognized by EE Times as the number one ranked EDA supplier (by EDA users) in customer satisfaction for five consecutive years.

In May of 2008, SpringSoft combined all these independent companies together as a single global corporate entity. It added another component through the acquisition of start-up Nanovata, which complements the Laker technology. By merging together Novas, Silicon Canvas and Novaflow operations, SpringSoft is well positioned to realize more efficiency and leverage a single, proven channel worldwide to deliver its products. As a result of these mergers and acquisitions, SpringSoft is now one of the top five EDA companies in the world.

In March of 2009, SpringSoft completed the acquisition of Certess, inventors of the world's only functional qualification solution. This company's product perfectly complements SpringSoft's existing products and extends its verification enhancement franchise significantly.

Products

The Company has organized its products into two lines that help engineers save time - the Novas Verification Enhancement solutions and the Laker Custom IC Design solutions. Both sets of products are based on open platforms that allow easy integration of other tools in the EDA design flow.

Verification Enhancement Solutions

The Verification Enhancement Solutions make it easier for engineers to do more verification in less time. SpringSoft is the only EDA vendor specializing in verification enhancement solutions. The Novas line includes the Verdi Automated Debug System, which cuts debug time in half; the Siloti Visibility Automation solution, which speeds up simulation; and the Certitude™ Functional Qualification system, which removes verification uncertainty. These products help unify the chip design flow by interoperating with third-party simulators using industry-standard languages and interfaces to improve design comprehension and productivity throughout the functional verification process.

Custom IC Design Solutions

SpringSoft's Custom IC Design solutions are comprised of the Laker Custom IC Design products and are used at the physical design stage of IC design. A correct and optimized layout is critical to meeting design specifications and constraints such as chip area, power consumption, timing, and manufacturability. The Laker products help engineers produce better results with less effort.



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At the core of the Laker layout system is its patented Magic Cell (MCell™) parameterized device technology and a built-in design rule check (DRC) engine that enable a powerful schematic-driven layout flow.

SpringSoft Community

SpringSoft's primary market is the semiconductor industry, and its products are used by all of the major fabless and integrated device manufacturers (IDMs) who design digital, analog, and mixed signal devices. Its solutions are used to design microprocessors, digital signal processors (DSPs), application-specific ICs (ASICs), and other custom components. Its customers are also found within the captive IC design groups of large systems companies which are developing products for applications ranging from computing, telecommunications, networking, wireless, games, automotive, medical, test and instrumentation.

SpringSoft's Verification Enhancement products have been used commercially since early 1997. More than 12,000 licenses are in use by system and IC designers worldwide. In addition, more than 50 industry-leading and emerging EDA companies, IP providers, and semiconductor chip companies collaborate with SpringSoft to integrate their verification tools with SpringSoft's verification enhancement products to provide integrated, production-proven tool flows. Cadence, Mentor Graphics, and Synopsys are among the 10 companies that OEM components of the Novas debug platform.

Over 300 companies worldwide, including 7 of the top 10 semiconductor companies, have adopted Laker custom layout solutions since 2001. The Laker technology has been integrated with a growing list of partner solutions including those offered by, Apache, Ciranova, ClioSoft, Legend, LogicVision, Pulsic, and Pyxis. SpringSoft has also partnered with tier one and specialty foundries including TSMC, UMC, and Vanguard to provide foundry-certified process design kits (PDKs) to the custom IC design community. Working closely with the Interoperable PDK Library (IPL) organization, SpringSoft has worked to provide the industry's most comprehensive support for OpenAccess.