

## **Symwave Taps Advisers, Eyes Q3 Ramp-Up**

### ***TECHNOLOGY: Advisory board includes ex-Broadcom executive***

By Sarah Tolhoff

Laguna Niguel startup Symwave Inc. has assembled its own dream team as it looks to start producing chips later this year.

The company, which moved to Orange County from San Diego last year, has hired some technology veterans for a technical advisory board, separate from its board of directors.

The advisory board's members all have ties to Symwave Chief Executive Yossi Cohen, an engineer who left Irvine's Broadcom Corp. in 2008 after a decade at the chipmaker.

Symwave makes chips for the next generation of universal serial bus ports, the most popular way of connecting consumer electronics to a PC.

Cohen named Dell Inc.'s Kevin Kettler, Best Buy Co.'s Brian Chubboy and Intel Corp.'s Gil Frostig advisers in December.

Last week, he added a former Broadcom colleague, Vahid Manian, who headed up global manufacturing at the chipmaker until he left last month in a flap over his education background.

"Every one of these people has been approached by me," Cohen said. "I've known each of them for a very long time, and I've worked with them before. These are the guys who I really wanted."

Kettler is chief technical officer at Dell. Prior to Dell, he worked at IBM Corp. for a dozen years developing PCs.

Chubboy is a senior manager for exclusive brands at Best Buy, where he helps pick suppliers of flat-panel TVs, digital music players, computer accessories and other products. He's done stints at Dell, Hewlett-Packard Co. and Raytheon Co.

Frostig is vice president of Intel's mobility group and director of low power components for the ultra mobility group.

Manian had a long history at Broadcom. That ended abruptly in December when Broadcom let him go after an inquiry into his education background was spurred by a tip from controversial San Diego investor Barry Minkow.

Broadcom found that Manian didn't receive a bachelor's and master's from the University of California, Irvine, as he stated on his resume.

Manian's departure from Broadcom didn't figure into Symwave's decision to go after him for the advisory post, according to Cohen.

"I cannot fathom anyone else who would question his abilities," he said. "Degree or no degree is completely irrelevant in my opinion. The (education) issue wasn't something I overlooked—I honestly don't care."

Cohen went further in backing his former colleague: "To me and to anyone who knows anything about the fabless semiconductor industry, there's no doubt that Vahid is unquestionably considered to be the most qualified operations manager. There is nobody better."

Manian and the other advisers have a broad mandate.

The group is set to "help guide the company's strategic decisions," Cohen said.

The advisers' connections could help Symwave, which has a small amount of sales and recently raised \$10 million in venture funding.

"They can help the company with their past relationships, things like introductions and networking," he said.

The group plans to meet monthly to confer on Symwave's next big phase—readying chips for consumer electronics makers.

Symwave's chips run USB ports in consumer electronics. The latest version of the ports, USB 3.0, transfers data about 10 times faster than existing ones.

The company has been developing a chip that will sit within a digital camera, music player, storage device, cell phone or other device.

Symwave hopes to start large-scale production of its chips in the third quarter.

That's where Manian can lend expertise.

He was the first operations manager at Broadcom and for 13 years managed its worldwide manufacturing group, which now has some 500 workers.

He's regarded in the industry as a pioneer in fabless chip making, where chips are designed by a company and production is contracted out to lower-cost areas.

Before Broadcom, Manian spent a dozen years at Silicon Systems Inc., a Texas Instruments Inc. unit that moved from Tustin to Texas in 2001.

Manian has served on the boards of San Jose-based Global Semiconductor Alliance, a trade group, and Santa Ana's STEC Inc., which makes flash memory-based data storage drives.

"Time will tell in terms of my contributions to Broadcom," Manian said. "But I'm very experienced and capable of ramping up very small runs to very large volumes. USB 3.0 is a very high volume market with a demanding set of tier-one manufacturers as customers."

Potential customers include Silicon Valley's Seagate Technology LLC, SanDisk Corp. and Apple Inc., as well as Lake Forest's Western Digital Corp.

At the International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas earlier this month, Symwave showed off its chips by streaming data to one of Seagate's external storage drives.

"There was a lot of buzz," Symwave spokesman John O'Neill said. "The whole market is eager for a new product to really stimulate an upgrade cycle. We are running as fast as we can to enable the end markets, and so far it looks like we have a significant lead."

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