

Press/Analyst Contacts:

Pat Rugg
VP Sales & Marketing
The Athena Group, Inc.
352/371-2567 x110
prugg@athena-group.com

Jon Mellott
CTO
The Athena Group, Inc.
352/371-2567 x108
jon@athena-group.com

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ATHENA WINS SECOND AWARD FROM DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

Three year project to develop next-generation signal processing technology

GAINESVILLE, FL - September 23, 2003 - The Athena Group, a provider of high-performance, low-power signal processing products, today announced they have received a second \$2,000,000 award from the Department of Commerce's Advanced Technology Program (ATP). Under this award, Athena will combine the flexibility of programmable processors with the superior efficiency and performance of hard-wired, special-purpose hardware to develop a signal processing technology capable of powering the next generation of consumer electronics products.

The Advanced Technology Program (<http://www.atp.nist.gov>) bridges the gap between the research laboratory and the marketplace, stimulating prosperity through innovation. Through partnerships with the private sector, ATP's early stage investment is accelerating the development of innovative technologies that promise significant commercial payoffs and widespread benefits for the nation. Part of the highly regarded National Institute of Standards and Technology, the ATP is changing the way industry approaches R&D, providing a mechanism for industry to extend its technological reach and push the envelope of what can be attempted.

Under the ATP program, Athena will develop an entirely new and unique approach to digital signal processing (DSP), one that will change the way we understand DSP. By leveraging proven signal processing technologies, innovative new technology, and software-orchestrated execution, Athena's new PowerFlow™ DSP technology will deliver not only vastly higher performance and lower latency operation, but also dramatic improvements in efficiency. These improvements address the three critical barriers in the future of system-on-a-chip (SoC) design: namely, power, design costs, and performance density.

"Software-orchestrated signal processing strikes a promising balance between the efficiency of fixed-function hardware streaming engines and the flexibility of software programmable DSPs", quotes Bob Payne, Sr. VP/GM of Advanced System Technology at Philips Semiconductors. "The concepts fits well with modern semiconductor manufacturing which is capable of supporting massively parallel computation while running lowest possible clock rates and voltage levels, producing both a power efficient and affordable design."

Comments Dr. Jon Mellott, CTO of The Athena Group, "Although the performance and programming efficiency of DSPs have improved since their introduction over 25 years ago, the complexity of the problems they must tackle far outpaces this growth. Numerous past attempts to close the gap have met with little success. The ATP project will enable Athena to research and develop a unique approach that advances both essential aspects of the problem simultaneously, and brings critical new technology to what is and has always been a uniquely domestic industry."

PowerFlow is a new stream-driven signal processing architecture that can increase DSP throughput by a factor of more than 100 and significantly reduce energy requirements. If successful in bridging the gap between error-forgiving fully programmable microprocessors and performance-improving function-specific processors, Athena's new SoC architecture will significantly reduce development-cycle times and costs. At the hub of the proposed system's architecture is a data transfer processor with multiple programmable interfaces linking it to cores, or clusters, of function-specific processors. The hub processor transfers data between cores and provides memory and other resources. Design and programming software that Athena will develop will enable chip designers to define, configure, and integrate function-specific processors for a wide range of applications, including wireless communications and real-time video.

About The Athena Group, Inc.

The Athena Group, Inc. of Gainesville, Florida licenses signal processing technology that delivers breakthrough performance, reduced area, and reduced power consumption in a broad range of SoC products. Athena technology is ideal for leading edge applications such as secure e-commerce, wireless communications, and video compression.

Athena was founded in 1986 and is privately held.



The Athena Group, Inc. / 5522 NW 43rd Street, Suite B / Gainesville, FL 32653
Phone: (352) 371-2567 / Toll-free: (800) 741-7440 / Fax: (352) 373-5182
www.athena-group.com

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