

Camera Flash Lights the Way

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The current trend towards cameras with flash in mobile phones offers a significant opportunity for manufacturers of driver ICs for LEDs. Jamie Fox, analyst in a recent IMS Research report, stated that: "LED-driver revenues from the mobile phone sector will increase 50% to \$600 million by 2012."

Mobile phones currently account for more revenues for LED drivers than any other sector. Backlighting applications account for most of this. However these revenues will not grow in line with increasing shipments of handsets because of declining driver unit prices, increasing integration, and because of some market share being lost to OLEDs. The growth in this sector will instead come from camera flash.

The number of phones with cameras is rapidly increasing and more and more of these, equipped typically with a 1,2 or 3 Mega Pixel camera, now require a flash. The xenon flash units used in most digital cameras are simply too large to be integrated into today's increasingly slim and trendy handsets. Instead, handset cameras use LED flash, generally requiring a discrete driver. Some drivers will drive the flash only (with a separate driver for backlighting). However many suppliers think that using a single driver to power both flash and backlighting will shortly become the preferred solution. These integrated drivers also offer good opportunities in this sector.

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