

Flex Logix looking to make processor chips more programmable

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Silicon Valley startup Flex Logix Technologies has announced that it is now in the business of selling newly developed programmable chip technology to hardware makers—they believe they have found a new way to produce field-programmable gate arrays (FPGAs) that is both cheaper and more amendable to being added to existing systems.

For many years hardware and software have held on to a rigid standard—hardware was designed in a very generic way then set firm—chips were given the ability to do certain things, and that was it. Software was then created to run on the platform that had been developed. But this old-school design strategy has one serious flaw—hardware updates take too long and cost too much money. Into this void steps Geoff Tate, CEO of Flex Logix—he claims that engineers

with his company have come up with a new and better way to create FPGAs, paving the way for their use in a variety of specialized applications. FPGAs are identical in most respects to regular old microprocessors, at least in how they function—the difference is that they can be programmed. The reason that all of the microprocessors in our phones, computers, etc. aren't FPGAs is because they cost more to make and consume more energy. Tate claims that his engineers have figured out a way to put all the programmable logic on the same [chip](#), something that other big-name makers have not been able to do. That makes things easier for [chip designers](#) and for those on the manufacturing end, making the new chips a viable option for certain applications.

Tate says that communications gear is one of the best candidates for the new chip design—standards, needs and new advances mean they could benefit greatly from chips that could be updated when needed, instead of going back to the design table every round. Another area where the chips could prove useful is large data centers—just last year Microsoft announced that it had put FPGAs into its Bing search system and saw a speed-up of 95 percent.

Instead of making the chips, Flex Logix plans to license its technology to others in the field or directly to those already making the old-fashioned kind. As a sign of the company's optimism, Tate recently told the media that he expects to see products based on the new technology hitting the market as early as next year.

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