TE, Molex to dual-source high-speed connectivity products

Martin Rowe - December 16, 2016

Connector giants TE Connectivity and Molex have signed a dual-source agreement where the companies will both source connectors, modules, and other products designed for high-speed serial applications. Having two sources for these products means that engineers can specify both companies into designs and purchasing people won't be locked into one source, which mitigates potential delivery problems for production.

Nathan Tracy

The product lines cover high-speed I/O such as pluggable modules, and backplane products such as connectors for datacenters. Specifically, the agreement covers zSFP+ interconnects, zQSFP+ interconnects, CDFP interconnects, microQSFP interconnects, and Nano-Pitch I/O interconnects. The photo shows some of these products. The agreement covers electrical connectivity products, but not optical products although the pluggable module cages can be used with electrical or optical I/O cables.

"Having a second source improves time to market," said TE's Nathan Tracy in a conference call. "We strive to build these products to perform exactly the same, regardless of the source. That ensures interoperability of links regardless of which company supplies the parts."

Scott Sommers

While purchasing managers like to have more than one source for products, engineers may hesitate because of possible differences in performance. At speeds of 56 Gbits/s and higher, small differences can create performance and interoperability problems. Molex's Scott Sommers added "this agreement goes beyond simply providing a second source. Each company will test the other's products and provide data to customers."

This isn't the first time that the arch competitors have cooperated to serve the market. Tracy noted that the companies have cooperated on 25 Gbit/s products, some of which were originated at Molex. Indeed, 25 Gbit/s links are just now moving into wide-scale deployment. "Datacenters always need more speed," said Tracy. "Development of 50 Gbps links is well underway and 100 Gbit/s links will follow."

An agreement between TE Connectivity and Molex brings two sources for high-speed connectors, cables, and cages for datacenter products. Source: TE Connectivity

Molex zQSFP+ product page
TE Connectivity QSFP/QSFP+ and zQSFP+ product page