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**Dow Corning pushing into photonic materials market**

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Dow Corning Corp. announced plans to extend its materials, technology and services to the \$65 billion market for optoelectronics by bringing its photonics solutions business development program under the wider umbrella of the company's mainstream Electronics business.

As a result, Dow Corning said it will increase activity in the sales, marketing and product development of photonic materials targeting a number of end markets, including automotive, displays and telecommunications.

In line with standard company practice, Dow Corning established a photonics solutions business development program in 2003 in order to explore and develop market opportunities for the company's technology in optoelectronics. While Dow Corning routinely establishes business development programs with the goal of bringing them into established businesses within three to five years, photonics solutions graduated to mainstream in less than two - a clear indication of the rate at which optoelectronics is moving.

According to Tom Cook, global industry director for Dow Corning's Electronics business, photonics solutions was fast-tracked chiefly because of strong marketplace demand and interest. "We were feeling a strong pull from our sales base," Cook said.

Dow Corning (Midland, Mich.) said the newly formed Light Management group is charged with helping customers develop and commercialize applications that rely on the emission, transmission, amplification, detection, modulation and switching of light.

Optoelectronic systems, which combine both photonics and microelectronics, is already a significant market opportunity. According to the Optoelectronics Industry Development Association (OIDA), the global market for optoelectronics components was worth \$65 billion in 2004 and the market for optoelectronics components accounted for \$14 billion.

The market is expected to grow substantially in coming years as light-based technology, which holds the promise of advances like faster data

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transmission, displaces some conventional electronics.

In fact, Cook said, photonics' potential to uproot conventional electronics, including some of the Electronics group's core business of silicone-based products for sealing, bonding, adhering and related applications, is part of the motivation for the establishment of the Light Management group.

"From a strategic standpoint, it makes sense to invest in something that is going to displace some of your existing offerings," Cook said. "The beauty is that photonics plays so well into silicone and the technology that we already understand."

Plans call for the initial focus of the Light Management group to include commercializing encapsulants and lenses for light-emitting diodes (LED) as well as materials for optical assemblies, fiber optics and light pipe/guidance applications. The group will also provide a range of services, from optical waveguide prototyping and R&D contracting to supply chain management services, the company said.

Cook said the Light Management group is already in discussions with a number of companies looking to apply photonic technology to real world applications in novel and exciting ways. For example, he said, Dow Corning has plans to develop optical interconnect and holographic material technologies in conjunction with optical IC maker Gemfire Corp. (Fremont, Calif.) and Aprilis Inc. (Maynard, Mass.), a holographic media and data storage system developer.

- **Dylan McGrath**  
*EE Times*

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