



# Integrated Multicore Processors for the Software-Defined Network: A Heavy Reading Competitive Analysis

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Integrated multicore processors are now the heart of almost every type of networking device, enabling network system developers to support network functions in software, and to support industry developments such as software-defined networking (SDN) and network functions virtualization (NFV). Multicore processors are highly integrated system-on-chip (SoC) devices with up to 72 cores and hardware acceleration for security and low-level packet processing. Multicore processors can be programmed in C or other high-level languages and are directly supported by multicore operating systems and applications software from companies such as 6WIND, Enea and Wind River.

Integrated multicore processors are becoming the dominant processor solution for networking applications. Network processors, originally developed to provide programmable high-speed packet processing, have been replaced by integrated multicore processors for all but the most demanding applications. Many multicore processors integrate hardware acceleration engines that were originally developed for network processors.

General-purpose multicore processors have become steadily more integrated. Intel and AMD have general-purpose multicore processors for high-performance applications and integrated multicore processors for lower-performance applications. Both companies are developing integrated multicore processors that will address high-performance networking applications.

The market for integrated multicore processors in networking continues to grow. Many companies are using common platforms with multicore processors for a wide range of applications, including SDN and NFV. This reduces development costs and allows telecom equipment makers to deliver flexible networking functions on standardized platforms, with hardware acceleration where necessary. Most processor vendors now have a range of devices with different numbers of cores and hardware acceleration engines, allowing system developers to meet a range of different performance and functional demands using multicore processors that are software-compatible across all their systems.

**Integrated Multicore Processors for the Software-Defined Network: A Heavy Reading Competitive Analysis** surveys high-performance multicore processors for networking applications. The report also reviews the strategy, product mix and product architectures of 15 multicore processor, intellectual property (IP) and software vendors. As such, the report provides not only granular information on the components themselves – of interest to chip manufacturers and purchasers – but also insights into how the overall market for multicore processors is likely to develop – of interest to a wide audience, including carriers and investors.

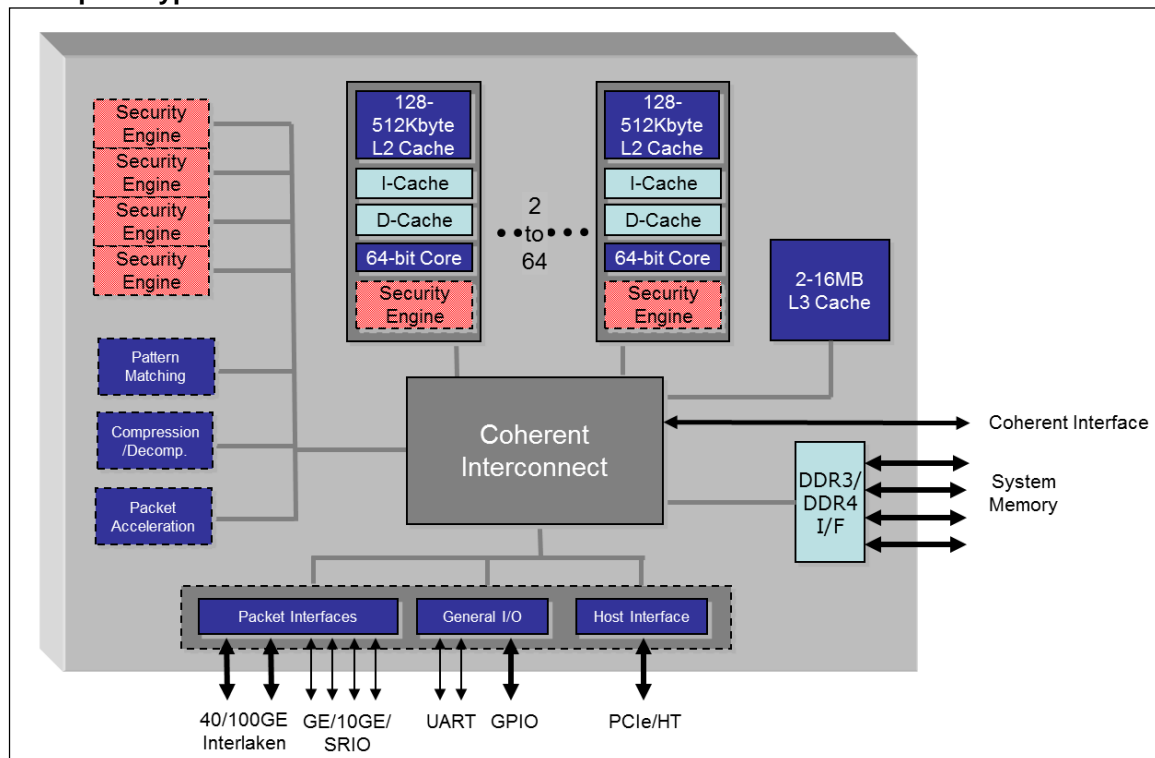
This report analyzes the multicore processor market by parsing devices into three groups:

- **General-purpose multicore processors** – multicore processors based on general-purpose CPUs that can be used in high-performance networking systems
- **Integrated multicore processors** – multicore processors with integrated packet-processing instructions, hardware acceleration engines and networking-specific interfaces
- **10-500Gbit/s network processors** – network processors with a mix of high-performance packet engines and hardware acceleration engines

This report delivers a complete competitive analysis of multicore processors, IP and software, covering more than 80 products from 15 components suppliers. It offers detailed information on all types of high-performance multicore processors, covering key product features as well as power, package and availability. In-depth interviews with component suppliers conducted for this report offer insight into how the market for multicore processors is likely to develop.

The excerpt below shows a typical fourth-generation integrated multicore processor. At the center are two 64-bit RISC cores. Some devices integrate floating-point units and enhanced instruction sets for networking related functions. Each core has instruction and data caches, typically 32KB to 78KB each. The RISC cores are closely coupled to multiple Level 2 caches, which are typically shared between two cores averaging 128KB-512KB per core. Several multicore architectures support hardware multithreading, in which each core runs several threads in parallel, switching between threads as hardware resources become available. This increases processor performance per core but requires additional resources in each core.

#### Excerpt 1: Typical Fourth-Generation Multicore Processor



Source: Earlswood Marketing

There are seven manufacturers with integrated multicore processors in production: Applied Micro, Avago, Broadcom, Cavium, Freescale, EZchip and Texas Instruments (TI). The highest-performance product from each company is shown in the excerpt below.

## Excerpt 2: Leading Integrated Multicore Processors in Production

COMPANY/DEVICE	CPU TYPE	32/64 BIT	MAX CPU SPEED	CPU #	THREADS PER CORE	HARDWARE VIRTUALIZATION	TECHNOLOGY
Applied Micro X-Gene	ARMv8	64	2.4 GHz	8	1	✓	40nm
Avago Axxia AXM5516	ARM Cortex-A15	32	1.6 GHz	16	1	✓	28nm
Broadcom XLP800/400 Family	MIPS 64 r2	64	1.6 GHz	Up to 8*	4	✗	40nm
Cavium Octeon II CN68xx	MIPS 64 r2	64	1.5 GHz	16, 24 or 32	1	✗	65nm
EZchip TILE-Gx72	VLIW	64	1.5 GHz	72	1	✗	40nm
Freescale QorIQ T4240	Power Arch. e6500	64	1.8 GHz	8	2	✓	28nm
TI Keystone II AM5K2E0x	ARM Cortex-A15	32	1.4 GHz	2 or 4	1	✓	28nm

\* Cache coherency supported up to 32 cores with four devices.

Source: Heavy Reading

## Report Scope & Structure

**Integrated Multicore Processors for the Software-Defined Network: A Heavy Reading Competitive Analysis** is structured as follows:

**Section I** is an introduction to the report, including the key findings of our research.

**Section II** presents an overview of multicore processor applications and architectures, including generic block diagrams. It also covers multicore IP and software with architecture diagrams.

**Section III** focuses on general-purpose multicore processors, including detailed vendor profiles, architecture diagrams and a competitive analysis of products now in production and announced products not yet available in production quantities. Full details for these products are presented in **Appendix A**.

**Section IV** examines integrated multicore processors, with detailed vendor profiles, architecture diagrams and a competitive analysis of products both current and forthcoming offerings. Full details for these products are presented in **Appendix B**.

**Section V** explores 10- to 500Gbit/s network processors, including detailed vendor profiles and a competitive analysis of products both current and announced. Full details for these products are presented in **Appendix C**.

**Integrated Multicore Processors for the Software-Defined Network: A Heavy Reading Competitive Analysis** is published in PDF format.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>I. INTRODUCTION &amp; KEY FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 Key Findings .....	6
1.2 Report Scope & Structure .....	7
<b>II. MULTICORE PROCESSOR APPLICATIONS &amp; ARCHITECTURES .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 General-Purpose Multicore Processor Architectures .....	10
2.2 Integrated Multicore Processor Architectures .....	10
2.3 Network Processor Architectures .....	11
2.4 Multicore IP .....	12
2.5 Multicore Software .....	16
<b>III. GENERAL-PURPOSE MULTICORE PROCESSORS .....</b>	<b>19</b>
3.1 Advanced Micro Devices Inc. (AMD) .....	19
3.2 Intel Corp. ....	21
<b>IV. INTEGRATED MULTICORE PROCESSORS .....</b>	<b>25</b>
4.1 Integrated Multicore Processors in Production .....	25
4.2 Latest Integrated Multicore Processors .....	27
4.3 Applied Micro Circuits Corp. ....	29
4.4 Broadcom Corp. ....	30
4.5 Cavium Inc. ....	32
4.6 EZchip Semiconductor Ltd. (Tilera) .....	34
4.7 Freescale Semiconductor Inc. ....	36
4.8 Intel Corp. (Avago/LSI) .....	40
4.9 Texas Instruments Inc. ....	43
<b>V. 10-500GBIT/S NETWORK PROCESSORS .....</b>	<b>45</b>
5.1 Leading Network Processors in Production .....	45
5.2 Latest Network Processors .....	46
5.3 Broadcom Corp. ....	48
5.4 EZchip Semiconductor Ltd. ....	48
5.5 Marvell Technology Group Ltd. ....	51
5.6 Netronome Systems Inc. ....	54
<b>APPENDIX A: GENERAL-PURPOSE MULTICORE PROCESSORS .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: INTEGRATED MULTICORE PROCESSORS .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: 10-500GBIT/S NETWORK PROCESSORS .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: ABOUT THE AUTHOR .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>APPENDIX E: LEGAL DISCLAIMER .....</b>	<b>75</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

### SECTION II

Figure 2.1: Microserver Platform .....	8
Figure 2.2: Rackmount Appliance Platform .....	9
Figure 2.3: Typical Multicore Processor ATCA Blade .....	9
Figure 2.4: Typical General-Purpose Chipset .....	10
Figure 2.5: Typical Fourth-Generation Multicore Processor .....	11
Figure 2.6: Typical VLIW-Based Network Processor .....	12
Figure 2.7: ARM Cortex-A57 64-bit Processor Core .....	13
Figure 2.8: ARM CoreLink System IP .....	14
Figure 2.9: Imagination Technologies MIPS I6400 Processor IP Core .....	15
Figure 2.10: Imagination Technologies MIPS I6400-Based Processor System .....	16
Figure 2.11: 6WINDGate in NFV .....	17
Figure 2.12: Wind River Intelligent Network Platform (INP) .....	18

### SECTION III

Figure 3.1: AMD Opteron 6300 Series Block Diagram .....	19
Figure 3.2: AMD Opteron A1100 .....	20
Figure 3.3: AMD Opteron Processors .....	21
Figure 3.4: AMD Opteron Multicore Processors Key Parameters .....	21
Figure 3.5: Intel Xeon C5500 System Diagram .....	22
Figure 3.6: Intel Xeon Processor E2600 v2 With Intel Communications Chipset 89xx Series .....	23
Figure 3.7: Intel Xeon Processors Key Parameters .....	23
Figure 3.8: Intel Xeon Multicore Processors .....	24

### SECTION IV

Figure 4.1: Leading Integrated Multicore Processors in Production .....	25
Figure 4.2: Leading Integrated Multicore Processor Performance .....	26
Figure 4.3: Leading Integrated Multicore Processor Interconnects .....	26
Figure 4.4: Latest Integrated Multicore Processors .....	27
Figure 4.5: Latest Integrated Multicore Processor Performance .....	28
Figure 4.6: Latest Integrated Multicore Processors Interconnects .....	28
Figure 4.7: Applied Micro X-Gene Platform .....	29
Figure 4.8: Applied Micro X-Gene Key Parameters .....	29
Figure 4.9: Broadcom XLP900 Multicore Processor .....	30
Figure 4.10: Broadcom Multicore Processor Key Parameters .....	31
Figure 4.11: Broadcom Multicore Processors .....	31
Figure 4.12: Cavium CN7xxx Octeon III Processor Family .....	32
Figure 4.13: Cavium ThunderX Multicore Processor .....	33
Figure 4.14: Cavium Multicore Key Parameters .....	33
Figure 4.15: Cavium Multicore Processors Summary .....	34
Figure 4.16: EZchip TILE-Gx72 Multicore Processor .....	35
Figure 4.17: EZchip TILE Multicore Key Parameters .....	35
Figure 4.18: EZchip TILE-Gx Multicore Processors .....	36
Figure 4.19: Freescale QorIQ AMP Series T4240 Multicore Processor .....	37
Figure 4.20: Freescale QorIQ LS2085 Processor .....	38
Figure 4.21: Freescale QorIQ Multicore Processor Key Parameters .....	38
Figure 4.22: Freescale Multicore Processors Summary .....	39
Figure 4.23: Freescale Multicore Processors Performance .....	40
Figure 4.24: Intel Axxia AXM5500 Multicore Processor .....	41
Figure 4.25: Intel Axxia Processors Key Parameters .....	42
Figure 4.26: Intel Axxia Multicore Processors .....	42
Figure 4.27: Texas Instruments Keystone II Block Diagram .....	43
Figure 4.28: Texas Instruments Keystone II Key Parameters .....	44

## SECTION V

Figure 5.1: Leading Network Processors in Production .....	45
Figure 5.2: Leading Network Processor Interfaces .....	45
Figure 5.3: Leading Network Processor Memory & Traffic Manager .....	46
Figure 5.4: Latest Network Processors .....	46
Figure 5.5: Latest Network Processor Interfaces .....	47
Figure 5.6: Latest Network Processor Memory & Traffic Manager .....	47
Figure 5.7: Broadcom Network Processors.....	48
Figure 5.8: EZchip NP-4 .....	48
Figure 5.9: EZchip NPS.....	49
Figure 5.10: EZchip Network Processor Key Parameters.....	49
Figure 5.11: EZchip Network Processors Overview.....	50
Figure 5.12: EZchip Network Processor Interfaces.....	50
Figure 5.13: Marvell Xelerated HX Family.....	51
Figure 5.14: Marvell Xelerated Network Processor Key Parameters.....	52
Figure 5.15: Marvell Xelerated Network Processors Overview .....	52
Figure 5.16: Marvell Xelerated Network Processor Interfaces.....	53
Figure 5.17: Netronome NFP32xx.....	54
Figure 5.18: Netronome NFP-6xxx.....	55
Figure 5.19: Netronome NFP & Intel 28xx Key Parameters .....	56
Figure 5.20: Netronome Network Processor Interfaces .....	56

## APPENDIX A

Figure A.1: General-Purpose Multicore Processor Summary .....	57
Figure A.2: General-Purpose Multicore Processor I/O .....	58

## APPENDIX B

Figure B.1: Integrated Multicore Processor Summary (>10 Gbit/s) .....	59
Figure B.2: Integrated Multicore Processor Features.....	63

## APPENDIX C

Figure C.1: 10-500Gbit/s Network Processor Summary .....	69
Figure C.2: 10-500Gbit/s Network Processor Architecture .....	70
Figure C.3: 10-500Gbit/s Network Processor I/O .....	72

## PROFILED MULTICORE PROCESSOR SUPPLIERS (15)

6WIND S.A. / [www.6wind.com](http://www.6wind.com)

Advanced Micro Devices Inc. (NYSE: AMD) / [www.amd.com](http://www.amd.com)

Applied Micro Circuits Corp. (Nasdaq: AMCC) / [www.amcc.com](http://www.amcc.com)

ARM Ltd. / [www.arm.com](http://www.arm.com)

Broadcom Corp. (Nasdaq: BCRM) / [www.broadcom.com](http://www.broadcom.com)

Cavium Inc. (Nasdaq: CAVM) / [www.cavium.com](http://www.cavium.com)

Enea AB (Nasdaq: ENEA) / [www.enea.com](http://www.enea.com)

EZchip Semiconductor Ltd. (Nasdaq: EZCH) / [www.ezchip.com](http://www.ezchip.com)

Freescale Semiconductor Inc. (NYSE: FSL) / [www.freescale.com](http://www.freescale.com)

Imagination Technologies Group plc (LSE: IMG) / [www.imgtec.com](http://www.imgtec.com)

Intel Corp. (Nasdaq: INTC) / [www.intel.com](http://www.intel.com)

Marvell Technology Group Ltd. (Nasdaq: MRVL) / [www.marvell.com](http://www.marvell.com)

Netronome Systems Inc. / [www.netronome.com](http://www.netronome.com)

Texas Instruments Inc. (NYSE: TXN) / [www.ti.com](http://www.ti.com)

Wind River Systems Inc., a subsidiary of Intel Corp. (Nasdaq: INTC) / [www.windriver.com](http://www.windriver.com)