# **Advanced Microvia Design**

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### Abstract

Microvias are the fastest growing new technology for printed circuits. Once you understand the basics, the advanced topics bring the real advantage to light. This talk will highlight the procedures and conditions that designers needs to consider making microvias the most productive and profitable architecture for their designs. These ideas go beyond the IPC standards, but are essential for any designer using microvias. The talk will cover: Vendor Qualification, Component / Assembly issues, Planning the Design, Signal Integrity concerns and Channel Routing procedures.

### Vendor Qualification

Selecting an HDI fabricator can be very challenging. One-way to discover the HDI capabilities of PCB fabricators is the new IPC-9151 Capabilities Benchmarking Panel. This standardized multilayer panel can be seen in Figure 1a. It is provided in 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 18, 24 and 36 layer structures with high and low density design rules, 5 thicknesses —for PCB and backplanes and in a large panel size of 18" x 24". The IPC Committee is planning other new Benchmarking Panels for substrates.

The via structure of the various designs is shown in Figure 1b. The blind vias are optional, but provide significant data on the fabricators capabilities.<sup>1</sup>

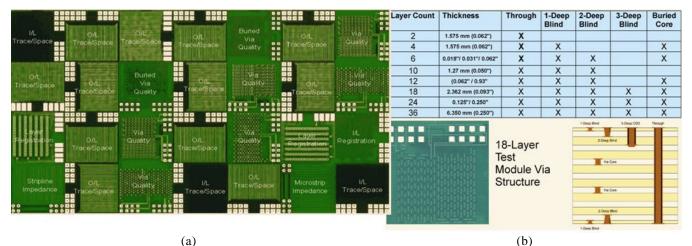


Figure 1(a) - New IPC-9151 Capability Benchmark (PCQR<sup>2</sup>) is an Ideal Way to Evaluate what Fabricators are Capable of Manufacturing HDI Boards with High Yields<sup>2</sup> – (b) IPC-9151 has 8 Different Layer Counts and Several Design-Rule Variations to Select as Standard Capability

### Microvia Quality

Microvias are nearly impossible to inspect visually and extremely difficult to cross-section. This necessitates a more indirect approach to verification of proper fabrication. Proper microvias, as seen in Figure 2b, can be distinguished from defective microvias, as seen in Figure 2a by using the Copyrighted CAT<sup>3</sup> coupons on production panel borders. These coupons are the same as used in IPC-9151 and correlate to a statistically measured via-chain resistance and accelerated thermal-cycling tests (HATS).<sup>3</sup> The criteria for quality microvia production is no more than 50 defective microvias per million microvias and a covariance of the standard deviations of the daisy chain Kelvin resistances of 5%.

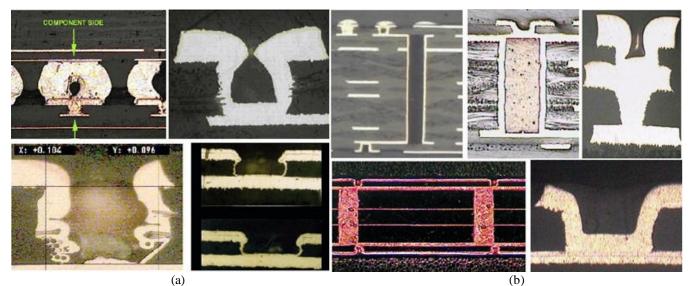


Figure 2 – (a) These Four Cross-Sections are all Defective and Rejected Microvias (b) These Five Microvias are Properly Drilled, Metallized and Plated<sup>4</sup>

### Via-In-Pad (VIP)

In a few cases, assemblers may have difficulty with the microvia-in-pad design approach. Technical papers published by OEMs that have used microvias and VIP technology indicate that a finer-mesh solder-paste should be employed and that OSP, HASL and Immersion Silver are the preferred final-finishes for the bare board. One alternative solution is to specify a "flat microvia pad". There are four alternatives to accomplish this, where as, only three are fabricator controlled and add extra costs. The four 'flat pads' filling processes are seen in Figure 3a. A surface plane flood (GND) is designed with panel and pattern plating metalization. b. Microvia non-conductive fill and plating cap. c. The effect of specialized copper plating baths with normal DC plating. d. The effect of pulse plating with periodic reversal but using normal copper plating baths.

The advantage of 'flat and filled' microvias is ease of assembly and more copper to carry current and heat.

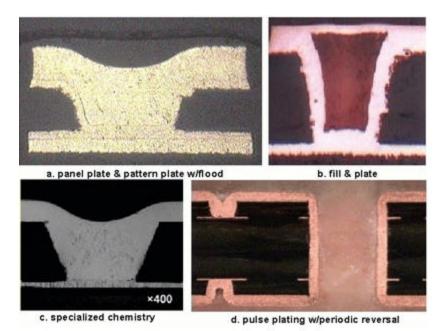


Figure 3 - Four Via Filling Processes for 'Flat Pads'.(a) Surface Plane Flood with Panel and Pattern Plating (b) Microvia Non-Conductive Fill and Plating Cap (c) the Effect of Specialized Copper Plating Baths with Normal DC Plating (d) The Effect of Pulse Plating with Periodic Reversal but using Normal Copper Plating Baths

### Planning the Design *Wiring Predictions*

The selection of signal layer stackup and design rules determine the *maximum wiring capability* (Wc) for a design. The schematic and total component parts list, along with their connections, can be used to estimate the total wiring lengths required to connect this design. This is the *wiring demand* (Wd). The *actual wiring capacity* is the *maximum wiring capacity* multiplied by the designs *Layout Efficiency* (LE). The actual wiring capacity must always be larger than the wiring demand,  $Wd \le LE * Wc.^5$  Details on these calculation are in the IPC-2315 and IPC-2226.

### HDI Tradeoffs to Through-holes

Figure 4 is a summary of the HDI equivalents to through-hole multilayers. The RCI's in the matrix are our 'Floor' numbers (or minimums). But the 'Ceiling' number for a range is out of our ability to calculate or set up at this time. The 'Max.' could be as high as the 'Sky'. It all depends on the various factors in the design. Yields are very sensitive to min. diameter, annular rings, min. trace and spacing, material thicknesses, total number of holes and their density. Other cost factors such as final finish, hole filling, and tolerances will affect the price.

There is a column for "Density" (DEN). This is the maximum number of electrical connections (called 'pins') per square inch of surface (for both sides). The solid lines are "Equivalent" PCBs. So, as an example, an 18-Layer TH (through-hole) board with an average of 100 'pins' per sq. in could have been designed as a 10-layer HDI board (1+8+1) because it can handle 200 'pins' per sq. in (p/si). Or, it could have been designed as a 6-layer HDI board with 2+2+2 (also 200 p/si).

The RCI does not show the "Relative" cost savings in this example. The "Absolute" cost saving is 52.2% for the 10-layer and 47.1% for the 6-layer HDI 'equivalents'. But a smaller board could result in more boards up per panel and the 'PRICE" would be even lower than the above numbers. In the range of 8L to 18L, the HDI boards, especially the 2+N+2 are *NOT* the equivalent of 8L to 18L TH boards, they represent boards with *12X- 20X* the density of TH boards. Even the 1+N+1 HDI boards represent TH boards with 14L to 30L layers!

This Matrix is based on FR-4. This has two important implications. The TH RCI scale (4L - 10L) represents competitive pricing set by China. This scale is depressed compared to the HDI pricing. So the HDI pricing, if equal or lower, *is very competitive*. If the material of construction is *NOT FR-4*, but a more expensive, low Dk or low Dj material, then the savings from HDI will be *MUCH LARGER* as you reduce layers!

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6L	0.63	20	-2.10	60	3.40	.80	1.40	60	1.85	160	2.21	200	3.84	260
8L	1.00	30	-2.70	80	4.35	100***	1.45	120	2.00	180	2.54	240	4.23	300
10L	1.20	40	- 3.50	120	5.75	140	2.00	200	3.00	210	3.00	260	4.81	400
12L	1.54	60	4.10	140	6,70	160	2.90	210 -	4.00	230	1	17	7.62	600
14L	2.66	70	4:78	160	7.49	180	3.27	220	5.01	250	11	1	9.60	800
16L	3.42	80	5.80	200	9.45	220	4.64	260	6.27	300	11	1	11.40	1000
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Figure 4 - Layer Count is not a Good Way to Compare Through-Hole (TH) Multilayers to HDI - HDI has a Much Higher Density for the Same Layers - To use this Table, the Diagonal Lines show the HDI Equivalents

### **Signal Integrity**

Signal integrity improvements are certainly available to all who take the time to respect Mother Nature. HDI's contribution comes mainly from the adage, "Smaller and Closer is Better!" That is, HDI's main contribution is *miniaturization*! The signal integrity improvements for HDI come from three phenomena:

- 1. Noise reduction
- 2. EMI radiation reduction
- 3. Improved signal propagation and lower attenuation

### Noise

Four categories of noise describe the various effects (see **Figure 5**).<sup>6</sup>

- 1. Signal quality of one net and its return path (ringing due to reflections)
- 2. Cross talk between two or more nets (noise pulses due to switching on neighboring lines)
- 3. **Switching noise** (noise on power and ground lines/planes)
- 4. EMI

Noise can come from many sources in the board layout, such as:

- Changes in trace width
- Plane splits
- Cutouts in Power/Ground planes
- Via antipads
- Insufficient plane capabilities
- Excessive stubs, branched or bifurcated traces
- Component lead frames
- Improper impedance matching and termination networks
- Coupling between signals
- Varying loads and logic families

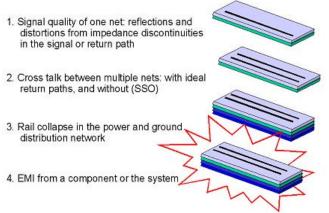


Figure 5 - Four Families of SI Problems

### Surface Ground Planes

A paper by Dr. Eric Bogatin provides the partial self inductance of a microvia 2 mils deep and 1 mil in diameter as less than 10 pH, while a drilled via, 10 mils in diameter and 32 mils deep has a partial self inductance of almost 200 pH.<sup>6</sup> This is significant for higher frequency designs. Dr. Bogatin goes on to point out that at 300 MHz, the impedance of an HDI microvia is only 18 milliohms compared to the through-hole via which is 400 milliohms.

The via-in-pad reduction of inductance is even more dramatic. One of the largest sources of inductance to devices and decoupling capacitors is the trace-via combination to power and ground. By placing the microvia in the SMT pad, this inductance is decreased to practically nothing. This is compared to a conventional trace to a through-hole that at 20 mils would add as much as 500pH to the loop inductance.

Using a via-in-pad microvia and a surface ground plane, there is essentially no inductance to ground, and if power is used as the second layer under the microvia, only a minimum inductance to power. The close nature of this power/ground combination will lower loop inductance and provide a significant amount of decoupling capacitance. A final advantage is the reduction of part spacing and a shortening of all the signal tracks. Figure 6a and Figure 6b show high-speed controlled

impedance multilayer redesigned with only the use of microvias-in-pads.<sup>6</sup> No parts were changed and current assembly minimum spacing was observed. The advantages from a cost and size point-of-view is nearly 40 percent lower cost, from 18 layers to 10 layers, and 40 percent smaller in size, allowing more up on a fabrication panel. The signal integrity was improved significantly.

For signal returns, the ideal return path is continuous and uniform. This is usually not the case in high-speed dense circuit boards. The more the return path is non-ideal (with discontinuities), the more it produces ground loops. The characteristic of continuous and uniform is illustrated in Figure 6b. In Figure 6a, the ground planes of a high-speed dense multilayer are shown. For this 9.2-inch by 6.3-inch 18-layer board, 8.46 square inches of copper is etched away to make room for the through-holes. Figure 6b is the 10-layer HDI multilayer that replaced the original 18-layer multilayer. The surface ground plane (primary side, Figure 6b) has only 6.63 square inches removed and the secondary side has only 6.35 square inches removed. This is 21.6 percent and 24.9 percent respectively less discontinuities for the return path. In addition, you can see that at the fine-pitch BGA devices, the ground copper goes substantially all the way into the center ground pins.

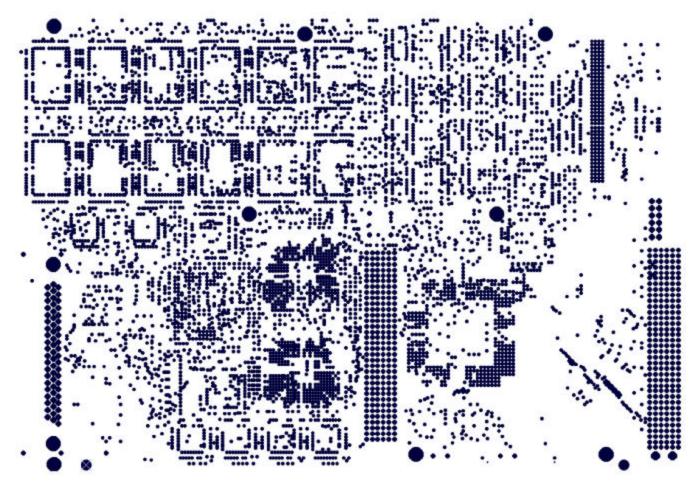
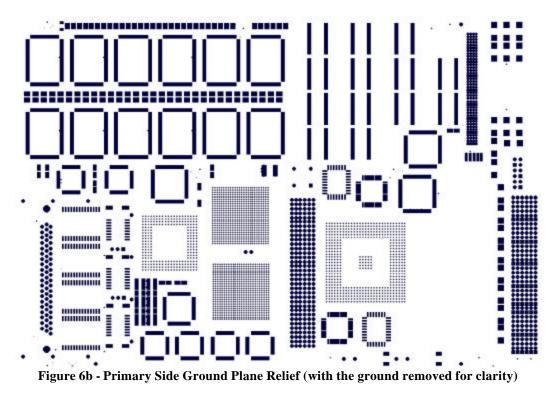


Figure 6a - Innerlayer Plane Ground Plane Relief



## Channel Routing<sup>7</sup>

### High I/O Components

One very useful HDI design technique is to use the blind vias to open up more routing space on the inner layer. This is shown in Figure 7a. By using blind vias, the routing space effectively double on the innerlayers and many more traces can be used to connect pins on the inner rows of a BGA. Nortel Networks patented channel routing in 2002.<sup>7</sup> With this technique, 1/2 to 1/3 the number of signal layers is required to connect a complex, high-I/O BGA.

As an example, Figure 7b shows a 1089 pin, 1.0mm pitch BGA. On the left side of the device is the original design (Layer 1) using a 20-layer TH board, on the right, Layer 1 for the 14 layer HDI version. The TH version used pad-via dogbones, so the surface GND flood ends at the border of the device. The HDI version shows channel routing, with GND connections on the surface., blind microvias for PWR-VCC to layer 2 and blind microvias to layer 3 for signals. All of these create the channels. Figure 7c shows layers 2 (PWR), layer 3 (Signal 1), layer 4 (Signal 2) and layer 5 (GND). The channels are evident on layers 3, 4 and 5. These open channels are now available on all layers including the BACK SIDE (Figure 7d).

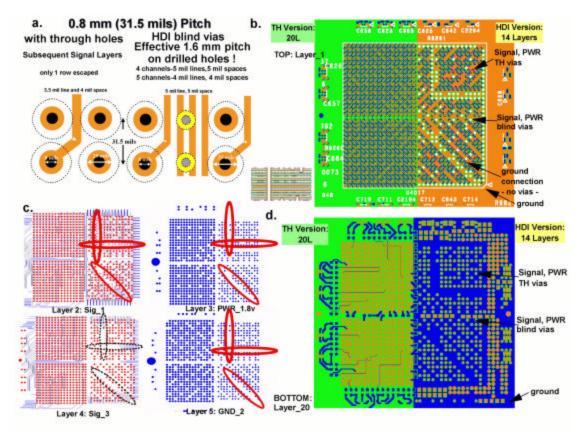


Figure 7 – (a) Channel Routing Utilizes Blind Vias to Create an Inner-Layer Channel To Route Out Interior Pins on Devices<sup>8</sup> For this 1089 pin, 1.0mm BGA, the Original 20-Layer TH boaRd, on the Left, Layer 1 for the (b)14-Layer HDI Version on the Right - The TH Version used Pad-Via Dogbones - The HDI Version Shows Channel Routing, with GND Connections on the Surface., Blind Microvias for PWR-VCC to Layer 2 and Blind Microvias to Layer 3 for Signals (c) Shows Layers 2 (PWR), Layer 3 (Signal 1), Layer 4 (Signal 2) and Layer 5 (GND) (d) The Back Side, Layer 20 on the Left and Layer 14 on the Right.

### Conclusion

Although microvias have been around 20 years, in high performance products, it is the current fine-pitch and high I/O BGAs that now require their services. The design of HDI-Microvia boards are not that complex, but many new techniques are being developed.

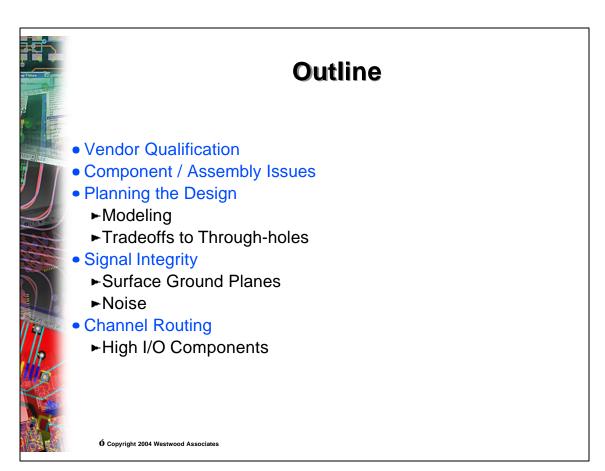
### References

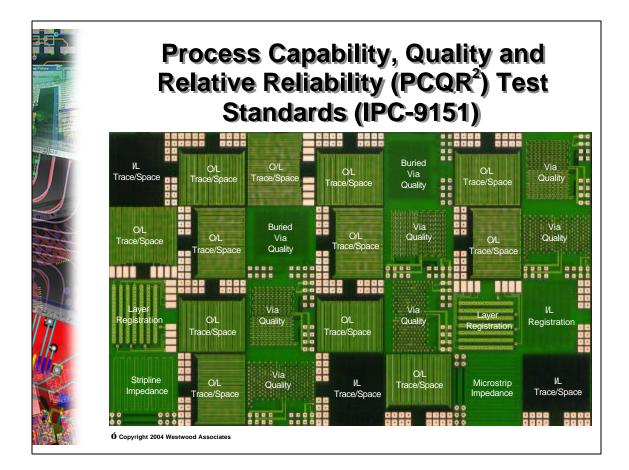
- 1. Details, artwork and a sample report is available on the IPC 9151 Website: <u>www.pcbquality.com</u>
- 2. Holden, H., How To Get Started In HDI With Microvias, Internet Article at www.circuitree.com, Nov, 2003,
- 3. Rhodes, R, HDI Performance Validation (Updated), <u>The Board Authority</u>, Vol.2 No.1, April 2000, pp22-27, Conductor Analysis Technology, www.cat-test.info/
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- 6. Holden, H., HDI's BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE ON HIGH-FREQUENCY SIGNAL INTEGRITY, Mentor Technical paper at <u>www.mentor.com/pcb/tech\_paper</u>
- 7. Nortel Networks owns US Patents 6,388,890 and 6,545,876 directed to Channel Routing.
- 8. Source: DDi conference, 1999



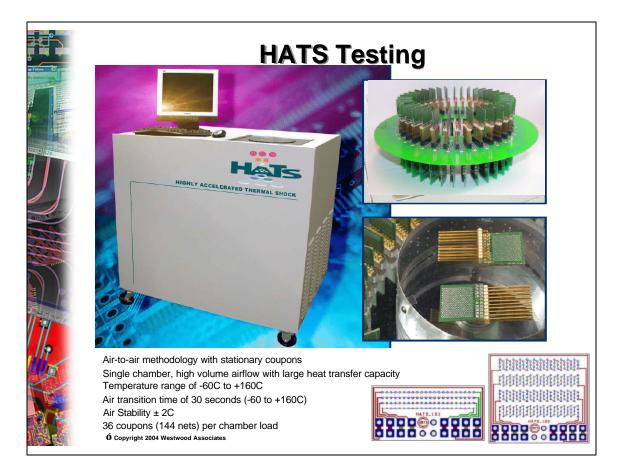
# Advanced HDI-Microvia Design

Happy Holden - Westwood





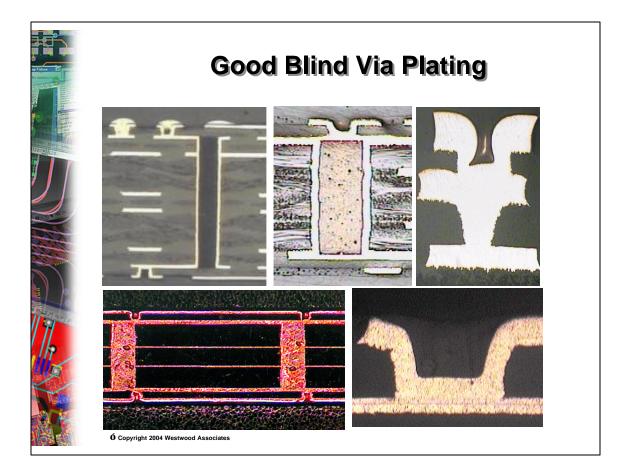
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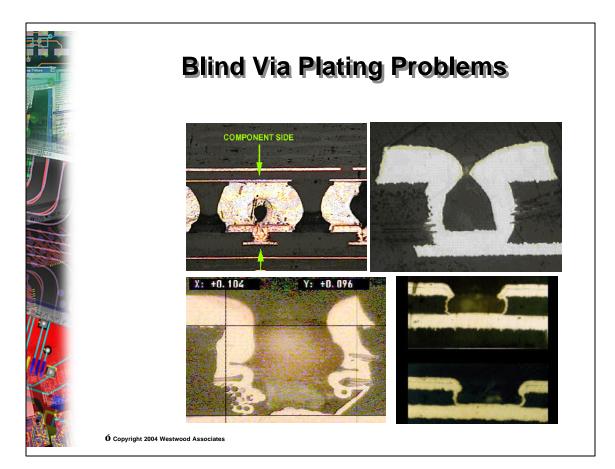


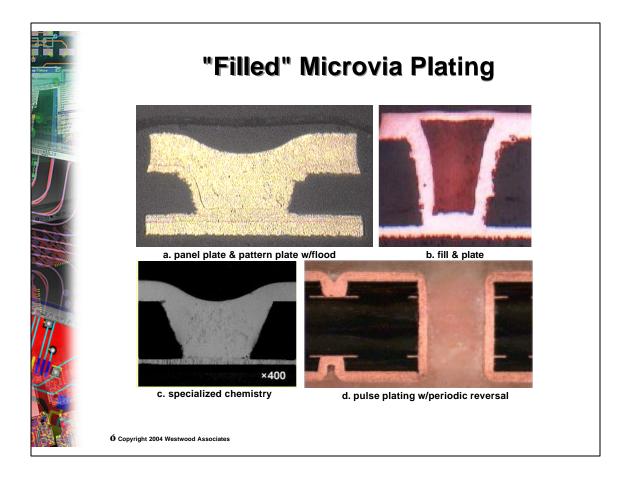


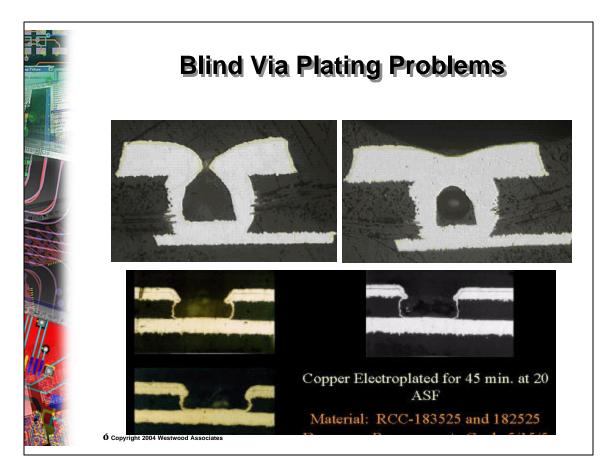
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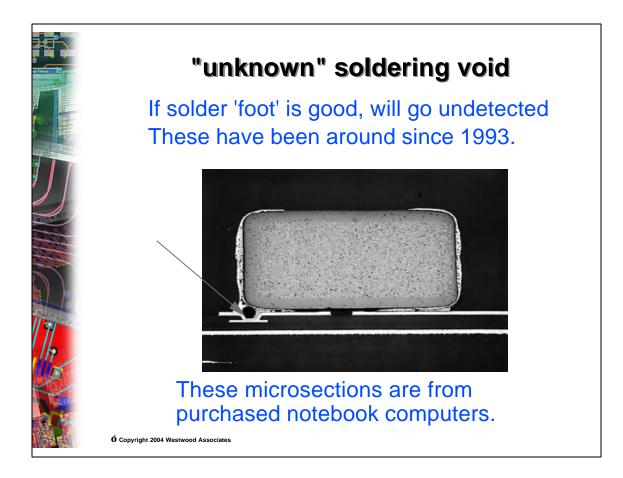
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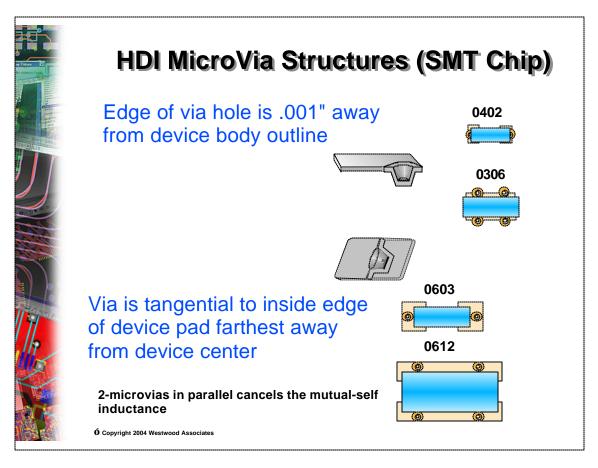


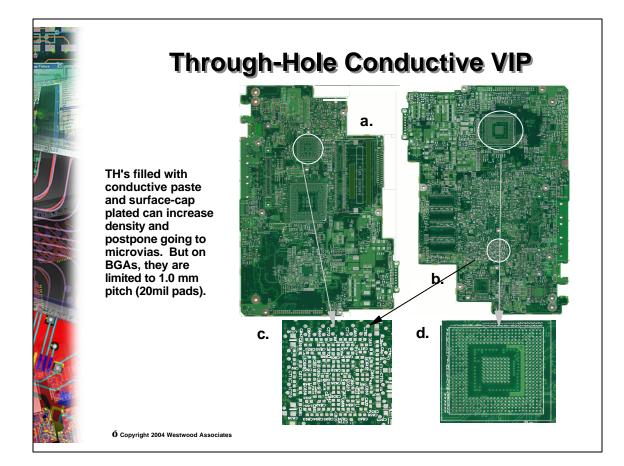


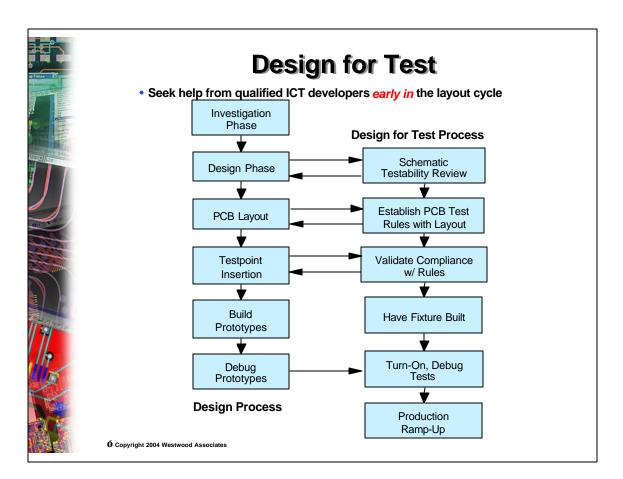


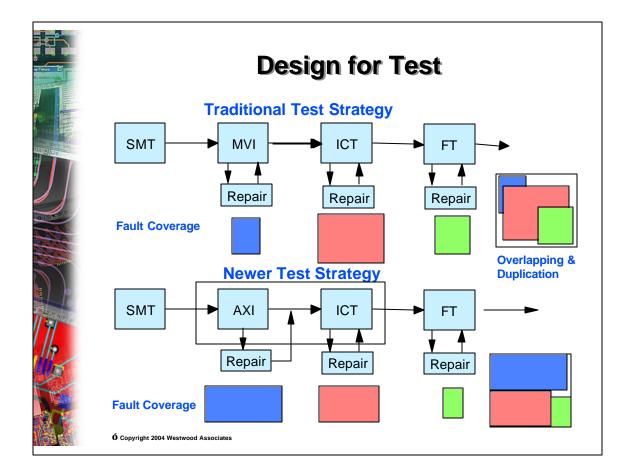


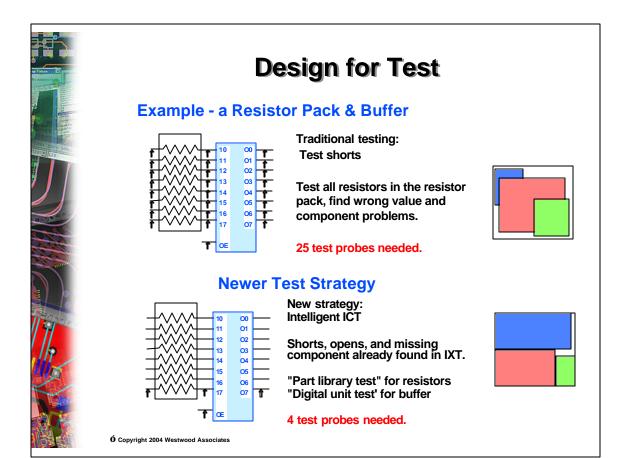




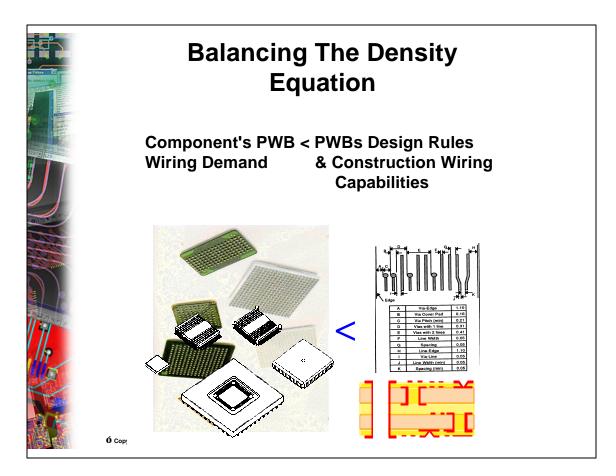


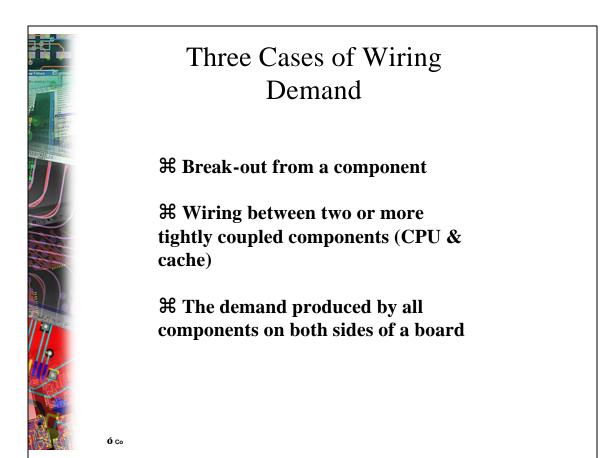


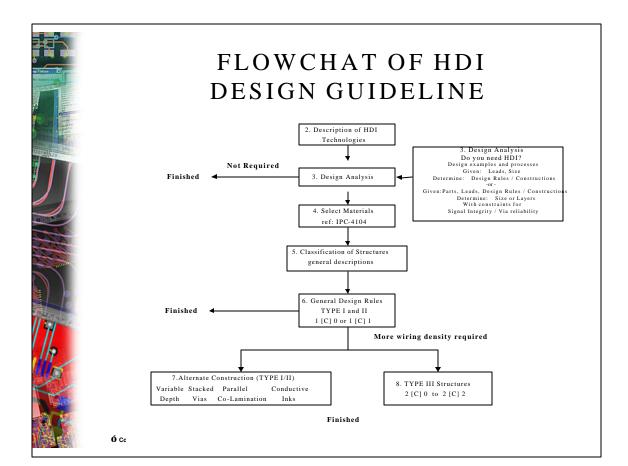




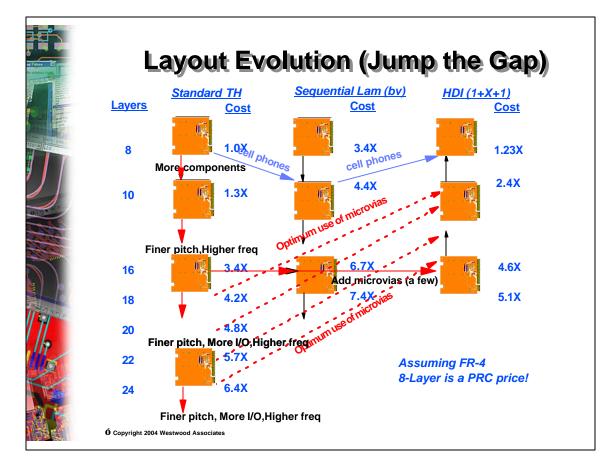
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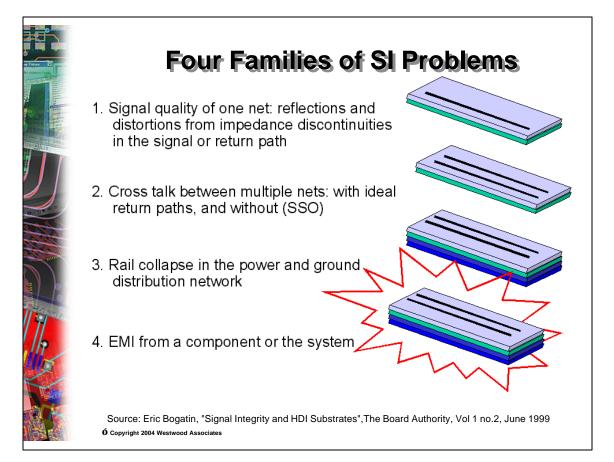




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### **HDI Features and SI Problems They Help Solve** Reduction of noise Reflections Crosstalk Simultaneous switching EMI reduction Improved signal propagation and lower attenuation **HDI** features Signal Cross Switching Noise quality talk Х Short interconnect lengths Х Х Х Low dielectric constant Small vias and small features Х Х Х Vias in pads Fine lines and thin dielectric Х Х

EMI

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Support for fine-pitch components

