

Thoughts on reverse engineering PCBs offshore

by [Armistead Technologies, LLC](#).

The critical issue with turning to offshore sources for reverse engineering expertise isn't the expertise itself. In fact, many legitimate reverse engineering firms based in Asia can draw on expertise equivalent to any American firm.

The real issue with sending your PCBs offshore to be reverse engineered, is control.

A recent BusinessWeek survey of 2,000 U.S. business executives revealed that the #1 fear was China, with nearly half the executives polled placing it at the top of their list of worries.¹

This concern is well-founded. In China, we can see an adolescent capitalist economy bursting at the seams, chock full of growth hormones and with little self-control. It's a place where reverse-engineered clones of highly anticipated products can hit the markets before the genuine articles can work their way into the system, creating a topsy-turvy world in which the Real McCoys are viewed as Johnny-come-lately copies. It's happened already in product categories from electronic devices (including Apple's iPhone and LG's Chocolate handheld²) to entire automobiles.^{2,3}

Yet, with a GNP predicted to grow to some \$44 trillion by 2050⁴, China is a manufacturing and production powerhouse. Chinese companies currently turn out high-quality legitimate goods and components for almost every major electronics brand. Recent high-profile missteps have brought to light some of the problems in oversight and supply chain management, but the juggernaut is unlikely to be slowed significantly.

The open question to owners of intellectual property is this: is the tumultuous Chinese business environment one in which you feel comfortable turning over the task of reverse engineering key circuit boards? Once a circuit board is reverse engineered and the manufacturing files are created in digital form, the only things keeping a lid on who gets your files are the ethics and oversight of the firm that performed the reverse engineering.

Armistead Technologies specializes in reverse engineering PCBs. We're based in Glen Arm, Maryland, just a half-hour's drive from Baltimore. And one important benefit to working with us, is the peace of mind you get from our reputation for respecting the confidentiality of our clients' intellectual property.

When you work with Armistead Technologies, no work is outsourced out of the country; no files are transmitted anywhere but to those individuals covered by an industry-standard non-disclosure agreement; your project is not discussed with other clients or prospective clients. You stay in control of your property, because we stay in control of the process.

To discuss your next reverse engineering project in inviolable secrecy, call us at (410) 627-2408.

FOOTNOTES:

1. BusinessWeek, August 9, 2007
2. Popular Science, August 22, 2007
3. Der Spiegel, August 28 2007
4. Source: Goldman Sachs

See also [PCB Reverse Engineering](#) Article.

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