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Windows Embedded SPARK

A $1,300 package offered at prices between $250 to $350

The **Windows Embedded SPARK** Your Imagination Program is essentially an extension of the code-named "SPARK" initiative introduced by Microsoft in November 2007. The SPARK program focused on Windows Embedded is now live, and hobbyist developers as well as members of the academic community have access to a $1,300 package offered at prices between $250 to $350. Via the new offering, the Redmond company has put together not only developer tools but also embedded platforms, and board packages to top it all off. "Devices running embedded operating systems have seen explosive growth in the past few years, and the announcement today demonstrates our commitment to the future of the embedded community. Our continued investment supports future innovation and new idea generation that will ultimately contribute to our vision of smart, connected, service-oriented devices," stated Kevin Dallas, general manager of Windows Embedded Business at Microsoft.As long as developers agree to a license stipulating the non-commercial usage of Windows Embedded SPARK, they will be able to enjoy complete versions of Windows Embedded CE 6.0 R2 and Visual Studio 2005 Professional Edition. And just to sweeten the deal, Microsoft is also offering free Board Support Package (BSP) certification through the SPARK Your Imagination program. Microsoft is not alone in this initiative and has pointed to the support of a few partners such as the following hardware vendors: AdvanTech, ICOP Digital, Keith & Koep, VIA Technologies and Special Computing. "Currently, under its MSDN Academic Alliance (MSDN AA) Program, Microsoft provides software for students and faculty in the embedded technology and design fields. Through the SPARK Your Imagination community program, the company is adding complementary offerings and extending them to the greater nonprofessional developer community to continue its dedication to the industry and future talent pool," Microsoft added.

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