

POWER | *designer*

Expert tips, tricks, and techniques for powerful designs

No. 110

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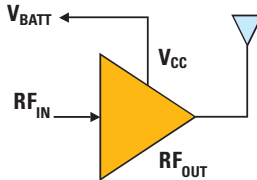
Optimizing RF Power Amplifier System Efficiency Using DC-DC Converters

— By Mathew Jacob, Applications Engineering Manager

Old Method

Standard PA

- Output power controlled by RF_{IN}
- V_{CC} directly connected to battery



New Method

PA with Supply Regulator

- Output power controlled by RF_{IN}
- V_{CC} connected to DC-DC converter
- V_{OUT} is optimized for given P_{OUT}

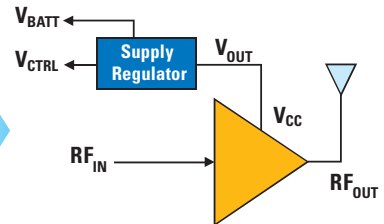


Figure 1. Old Method vs New Method

RF power amplifiers used in CDMA / WCDMA cellular standards have been traditionally powered directly from the battery. This makes system implementation easy but the requirement for linear power amplifiers in such standards have intrinsic inefficiencies throughout the transmit power spectrum.

Cellular standards have been evolving with transmission speeds that started from 14.4 kbps in CDMA-1 to 2 Mbps in CDMA2000/WCDMA. Apart from this, cellular providers have increased the services bundled with the 3G phones in order to increase the average revenue per subscriber. At the same time, the talk time and battery life is expected to be improved with the same or slightly higher capacity batteries. This makes system design challenging. System designers have to be very cautious and perform a power survey of each and every component on the phone board. The RF Power Amplifier (RF PA) powered directly from the battery is a major concern from the power budget perspective.

The modulation schemes used in CDMA and WCDMA result in an amplitude-modulated signal that exhibits a non-constant amplitude envelope. In order to preserve signal integrity and further spectral re-growth, a linear

NEXT ISSUE:

Emulated Current Mode Control

 **National
Semiconductor**



Dynamic Power Management of RF Power Amplifiers

Feature-Rich LM320x Family Enhances Battery Life in Portable Applications

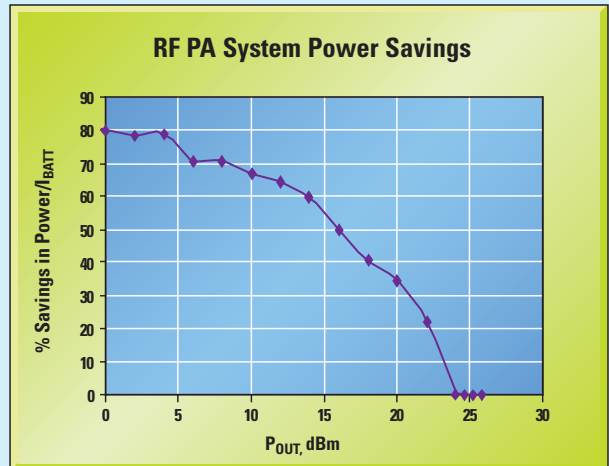
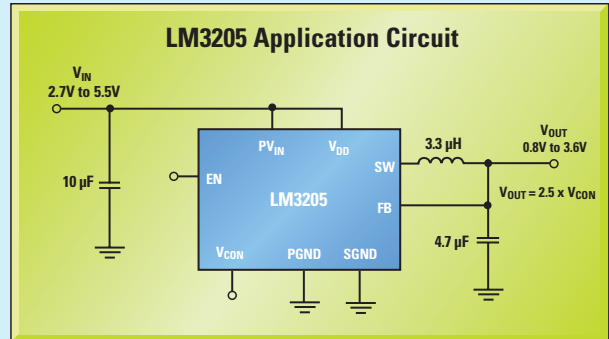
Family Features

- Dynamically adjustable output voltage optimizes RF PA power levels for increased battery life
- Bypass mode maintains maximum output power regardless of battery voltage
- 2 MHz Switching frequency minimizes external components and complies with spectral emission requirements

Ideal for powering RF power amplifiers in cell phones, smart PDA phones, GPS systems, two-way radios, and portable communications systems

Family Highlight:

DC-DC converters deliver up to 5X transmit time in RF PAs



Step-Down Switching Regulators for RF Power Amplifiers

Product ID	Description	V_{IN}		V_{OUT}	I_{OUT} (mA)	Bypass Modes	Packaging
		Min	Max				
LM3200	Dynamically adjustable output voltages, 2.2 μ H inductor	2.7	5.5	Adj (0.8 to 3.6V)	500	Forced and automatic	micro SMD-10
LM3202	Miniature, adjustable, step-down DC-DC converter	2.7	5.5	Adj (1.3 to 3.16)	650	None	micro SMD-8
LM3203	Miniature, adjustable, step-down DC-DC converter	2.7	5.5	Adj (0.8 to 3.6)	500	Forced	micro SMD-10
LM3204	Miniature, adjustable, step-down DC-DC converter	2.7	5.5	Adj (0.8 to 3.6)	355/500	Forced and automatic	micro SMD-10
LM3205	Miniature, adjustable, step-down DC-DC converter	2.7	5.5	Adj (0.8 to 3.6)	650	None	micro SMD-8

Optimizing RF Power Amplifier System Efficiency

power amplifier is necessary. However, power efficiency is traded off because power amplifiers operate efficiently when operated in gain compression. To meet the required linearity, the operating transmit power is backed off from the power amplifier's compression point that causes an overall reduction in efficiency. When the handset is operating in transmit mode, the RF power section consumes up to 65% of the overall power budget as a result of the PA's intrinsic inefficiencies.

For this reason, linear PAs are ideal candidates to be powered with a magnetic buck converter which will dramatically increase efficiency of the system.

Power-Added Efficiency (PAE) is a key performance metric of a power amplifier.

$$PAE (\%) = (P_{OUT} - P_{IN}) / P_{dc}$$

The key in using a DC-DC converter (PA supply regulator) is to reduce the Pdc factor in the denominator. When the PA is connected directly to the battery, $P_{dc} = V_{batt} \cdot I_{batt}$ and, when it is powered by a PA supply regulator, $P_{dc} = V_o \cdot I_o$. Now it can be seen that for increasing the PAE we have to have a low V_o and I_o compared to V_{batt} and I_{batt} . This is achieved by lowering the output voltage of the PA supply regulator at lower transmitted RF power levels. This in turn reduces I_o (current drawn by the PA) and results in a much lower input current drawn from the battery due to the inherent high efficiency of the DC-DC converter.

It is important to consider the power probability

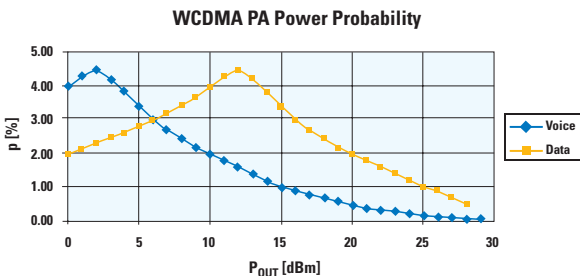


Figure 2. PA transmits low power levels for a high percentage of time in a typical cellular phone which reinforces the savings possible with a PA supply regulator

profile (see *Figure 2*) for the modulation methods to really understand the impact of savings in powering a PA with a supply regulator. The profiles are different for urban and rural regions.

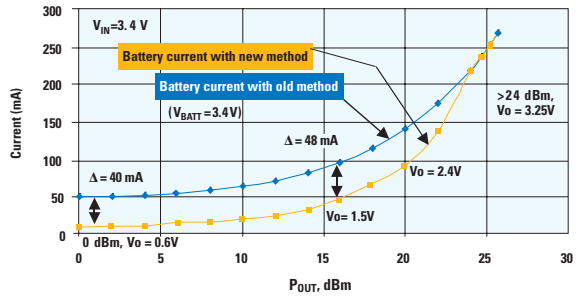


Figure 3. Savings in battery current when the DC-DC converter is used for powering the PA

As shown in *Figure 3*, the output voltage of the DC-DC converter has to be varied as the transmitted power levels are changed to maintain the Adjacent Channel Power/leakage Ratio (ACPR) specifications. The savings in battery current can be as high as 50 mA in the 0 dBm to 20 dBm power levels. *Figure 2* shows that the PA is operating in this band of power levels for a majority of its time.

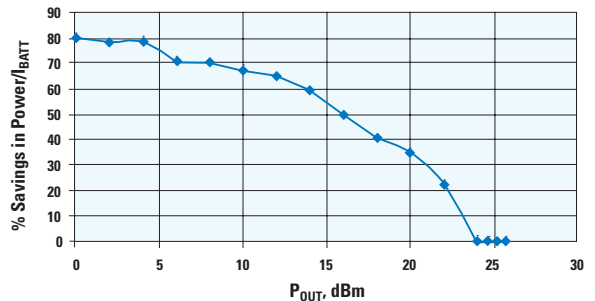


Figure 4. Percentage savings in power when the PA is powered by a PA supply regulator

So why do we have to change the voltage of the DC-DC converter as the transmitted power level is increased? The answer is that this change is needed to maintain the ACPR ratios. ACPR is used to characterize the distortion of power amplifiers and other subsystems for their tendency to cause interference with neighboring radio channels or

Industry's Lowest Noise 150 mA CMOS LDO

LP5900 Low Dropout Regulator Requires No Bypass Capacitor

Features

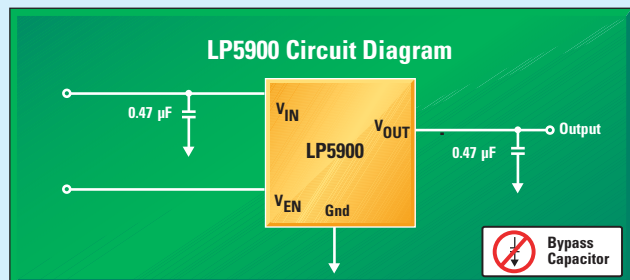
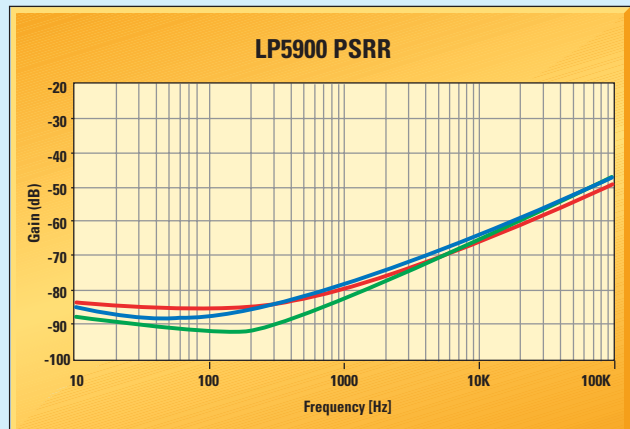
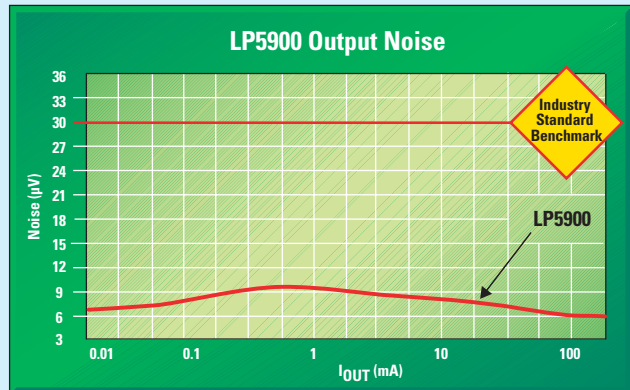
- Industry's lowest noise combined with 85 dB of Power Supply Ripple Rejection guarantees signal integrity
- 25 μA I_Q minimizes current drain when system operates in low-power mode
- Elimination of bypass capacitor reduces BOM to only two ceramic 0.47 μF capacitors
- Low 80 mV dropout voltage (typ.)
- Virtually zero ($<1\mu\text{A}$) I_q when disabled
- Available in a micro SMD-4 package
- LLP® packaging available soon

AVAILABLE
LEAD-FREE

Ideal for powering analog and RF signal path ICs, including low-noise amplifiers, voltage controlled oscillators, and RF receivers

Product Highlight:

Unique 150 mA RF LDO eliminates bypass capacitor and achieves low $6.5 \mu\text{V}_{\text{RMS}}$ noise



Optimizing RF Power Amplifier System Efficiency

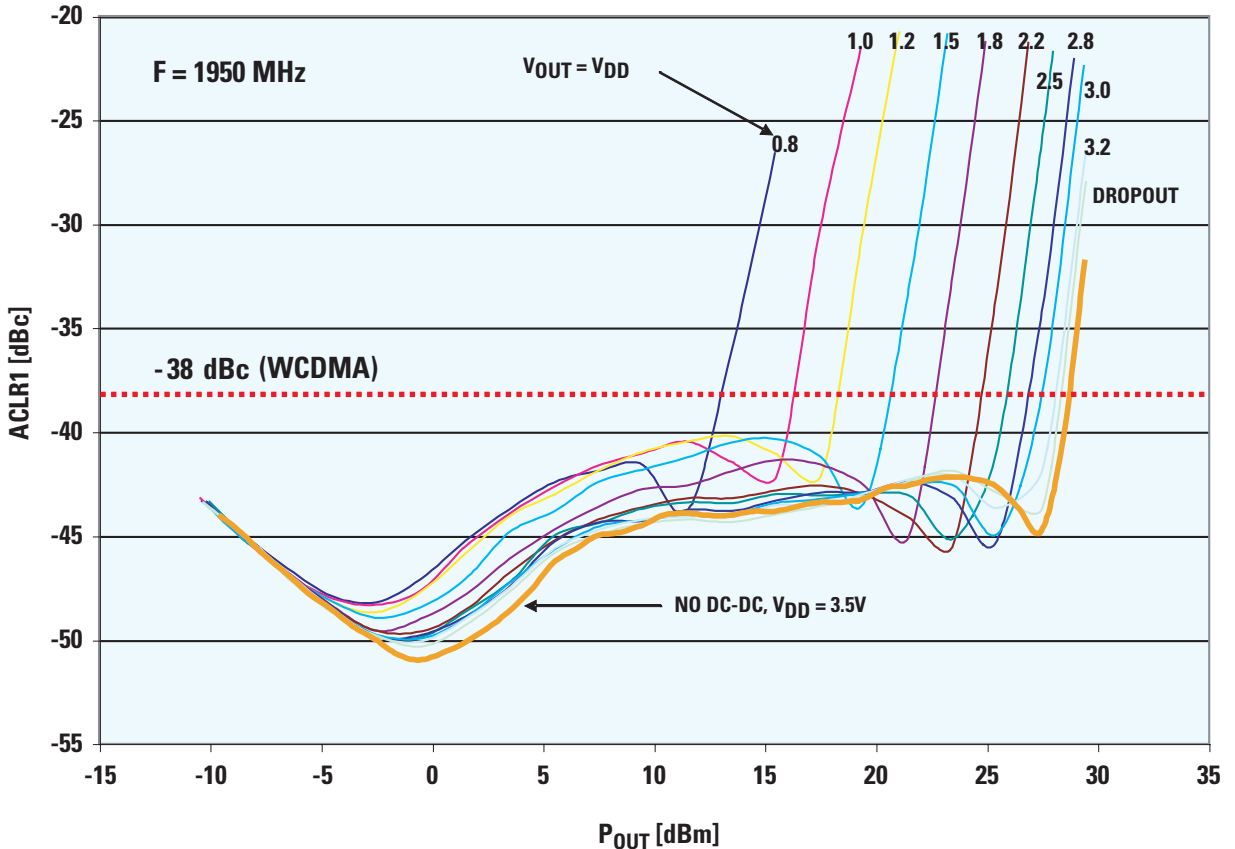


Figure 5. How ACLR is affected with respect to supply voltage to the PA and P_{OUT}

systems. It is specified as the ratio of the Power-Spectral Density (PSD) of the main channel to the PSD measured at several offset frequencies.

In *Figure 5* it can be seen that if the supply voltage to the PA is not increased as P_{OUT} is increased, the ACLR specifications cannot be met.

The system-level specification (3 GPP) for WCDMA is -34 dBc and, in order to preserve sufficient margin caused by temperature and device variances, the ACLR value of -38 dBc is used.

Key Requirements of Buck Converters for Powering RF Power Amplifiers

Buck converters that power RF PAs have specialized functions and are quite different from buck converters that power digital core processors. These differences arise in operating characteristics and parameters

such as switching FET ON-resistances, current limit, transient response, modes of operation such as PFM/PWM, startup time, quiescent current, and dropout behavior. The following examples illustrate these differences:

- High efficiency over wide output voltage and load range

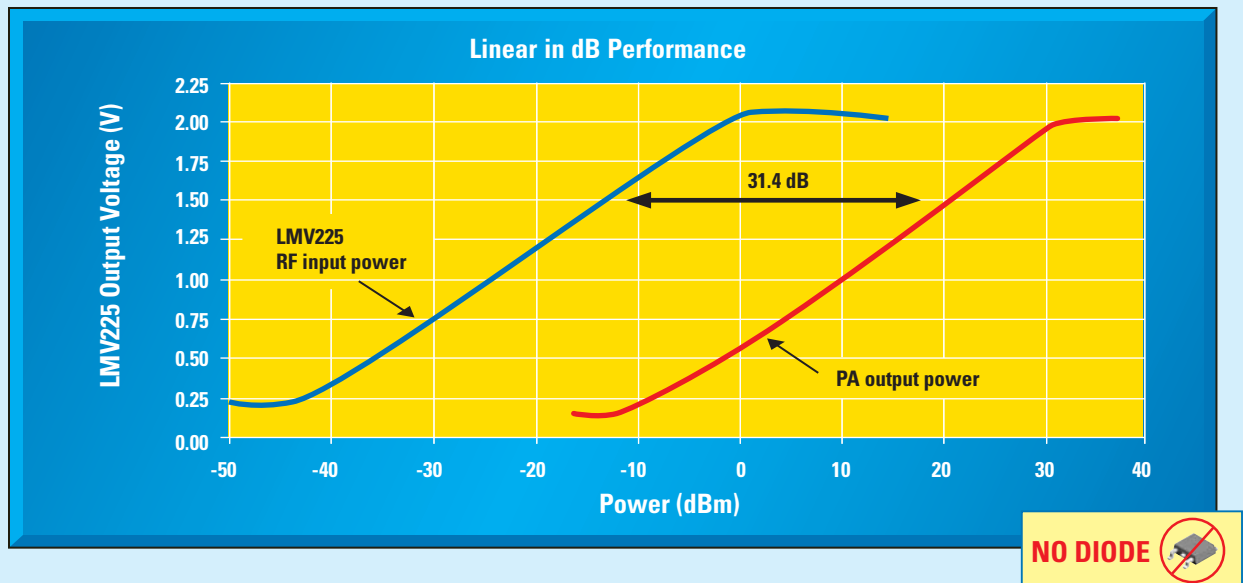
Example: LM3205 has efficiency of 96% at V_{IN} = 4.2V, V_O = 3.4V, I_O = 400 mA (high RF power) and 87% at V_{IN}=3.9V, V_O=1.5V, I_O = 100 mA (low RF power).

- Dynamic output voltage adjustment

Example: In LM3205 the output voltage can be adjusted between 0.8V to 3.6V using a Vcon pin. The voltage gain from Vcon to V_O is 2.5.

Simplify System Calibration with RF Detector Family

Accurate and Stable RF Power Detectors for Portable Devices



Family Features

- LMV227 100% RF tested for accuracy
- 30 dB Linear-in-dB power detection range
- Multi-band operation from 450 MHz to 2 GHz
- Accurate temperature compensation
- Logarithmic amplifier and mean square RF detector technology

Ideal for use in handsets, wireless LAN, WiFi, PC and PDA module cards, and GPS navigation modules

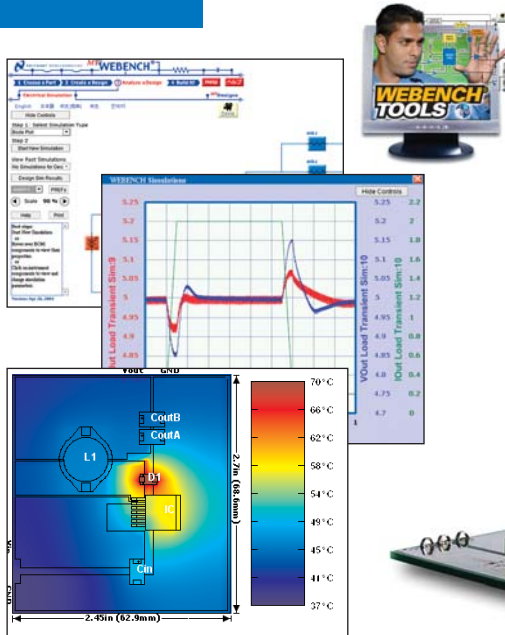
Family Highlight:

Real-time transmitter power adjustments simplify system calibration in communications systems

AVAILABLE
LEAD-FREE

Product ID	Application	Detector	Channel	Range	Package
LMV227	CDMA 2000, WCDMA, UMTS	Log amp	1	40 dB, 2.1 GHz	Micro SMD, LLP®
LMV225/226/228	CDMA, WCDMA, UMTS	Log amp	1	40 dB, 2.1 GHz	Micro SMD, LLP
LMV232	3G Mobile communications	Mean square	2	20 dB, 2.2 GHz	Micro SMD

Power Design Tools

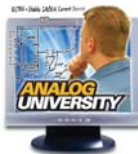


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