
Charge Pump Circuit Design

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Contents

Preface	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
Introduction	xiii

Chapter 1. History of the High-Voltage Charge Pump	1
1.1 Using a Transformer to Generate High Voltages	1
1.2 The Cockcroft-Walton High-voltage Charge Pump	3
1.3 The Dickson Charge Pump	5
1.3.1 The body effect	6
1.3.2 Implication of body effect on the Dickson charge pump	7
1.4 Better Solutions	8
Chapter 2. Basic MOS Device Physics	11
2.1 The P-N Junction	12
2.1.1 Reverse bias	13
2.1.2 Forward bias	14
2.1.3 P-N junction diode characteristics	16
2.2 The MOS Capacitor	17
2.2.1 The flat band condition	17
2.2.2 Accumulation	18
2.2.3 Depletion	19
2.2.4 Weak inversion	21
2.2.5 Strong inversion	21
2.3 Capacitance Variation of a MOS	22
2.4 The Threshold Voltage	23
2.5 Metal-Oxide Field-Effect Transistor	27
2.5.1 Device operation	27
2.5.2 Second-order effects for MOSFET operation	32
2.6 Latch-up in CMOS Technology	33
2.7 Merits of PMOS Versus NMOS in Circuit Design	35
2.8 The MOSFET Model	36
2.9 SPICE Simulation Convergence	38
2.10 Conclusion	40

vi Contents

Chapter 3. Basic Operation of a Charge Pump	41
3.1 Charge Pump System	41
3.2 Basic Concept: The Bucket Capacitor Model	43
3.3 The Dickson Charge Pump	45
3.4 Dynamic Analysis of the Charge Pump	49
3.4.1 The body effect revisited	54
3.5 Dynamic Analysis of the Charge Pump with Body Effect	55
3.6 Conclusion	57
Chapter 4. Charge Pump Design Criteria	59
4.1 Technology	60
4.1.1 System supply voltage	61
4.1.2 Silicon dioxide (SiO ₂)	66
4.1.3 Resistor	70
4.1.4 Transistor specification	72
4.2 Specification	75
4.2.1 Output load characteristics	75
4.2.2 Pump output voltage	77
4.2.3 Pump output current	80
4.2.4 Ripple on regulated output voltage	82
4.2.5 Pump regulation	85
4.2.6 Capacitive divider	85
4.2.7 Resistive divider	87
4.2.8 MOSFET biased type regulator	88
4.2.9 Which scheme should be used in design?	89
4.3 Pump Power Consumption	90
4.4 Die Size of the Charge Pump	90
4.5 Conclusion	91
Chapter 5. How to Design a Basic Charge Pump	93
5.1 Charge Pump Specifications	94
5.1.1 Output voltage	95
5.1.2 Current drivability	95
5.1.3 Output ramp-up time and recovery time	98
5.1.4 Power consumption	99
5.2 Pump Clock Source	100
5.3 Regulator Design	102
5.4 Non-overlapping Clock Generator	102
5.5 Cross-coupled Voltage Doubler Design	104
5.6 Logical Effort for Clock Buffer Sizing	106
5.7 Parasitic R and C	114
5.8 Power Bus and Bower Bus Capacitance	116
5.9 Conclusion	117
Chapter 6. Designing a Better Charge Pump	119
6.1 Parameters Associated with Pump Performance	120
6.1.1 Charge transfer point of view	121
6.1.2 Voltage point of view	125

6.2	How to Improve Charge Pump Efficiency	128
6.2.1	V_i cancellation scheme	129
6.2.2	Pump design using high-amplitude pump clocks	130
6.3	Regulation of the Pump	132
6.3.1	Resistive divider versus capacitive divider	132
6.3.2	Regulation controls	135
6.3.3	Noise control for regulation	136
6.4	Power Consumption versus Pump Performance	136
6.5	Charge Pump Area Efficiency	141
6.6	Layout Requirements for Pump Design	142
6.6.1	Parasitic capacitance	143
6.6.2	Miller effect (parasitic capacitance)	145
6.6.3	Junction capacitance	146
6.6.4	Improving layout efficiency per unit area	148
6.6.5	Well resistance	150
6.6.6	Critical signal width	153
6.6.7	Clock buffering	155
6.6.8	Power bus and decoupling capacitance	158
6.7	Conclusion	161
Chapter 7. Different Charge Pump Architectures		163
7.1	The 2-Phase Positive Charge Pump—Revisited	163
7.2	The 4-Phase Positive Charge Pump	166
7.3	The Modified 2-Phase Positive Charge Pump with Doubled Pump Clock Amplitude	178
7.4	The Static CTS Charge Pump	183
7.5	The Positive Charge Pump with Very High Amplitude Pump Clocks	185
7.6	The 2-Phase Negative Charge Pump	186
7.7	The 2-Phase Negative Charge Pump with Triple Well Technology	188
7.8	Conclusion	190
Chapter 8. Future Design References		193
8.1	Area Versus Performance	193
8.1.1	Output performance versus pump clock frequency	193
8.1.2	Output performance versus pump clock amplitude	196
8.2.3	Output performance versus number of pump stages	196
8.2	Power Consumption	198
8.2.1	Power consumption versus pump clock frequency	198
8.2.2	Power consumption versus number of pump stages	199
8.2.3	Power consumption versus pump clock amplitude	200
8.3	Noise Controls for the Charge Pump	202
8.3.1	Noise versus filtering capacitance	202
8.3.2	Noise versus balance of pump power	204
8.4	Off-Chip Charge Pump	207
8.4.1	Off-chip capacitive charge pump	208
8.4.2	Off-chip inductive charge pump	211
8.5	Conclusion	213

viii Contents

Chapter 9. A Practical Charge Pump Design Example and Analysis	215
9.1 Design Specification	217
9.2 Design Steps	218
9.2.1 Step 1: Determine N , the initial number of stages	218
9.2.2 Step 2: Determine f , the initial pump operating frequency	219
9.2.3 Step 3: Determine C , the initial size of the pump capacitor	219
9.2.4 Step 4: Determine the diode W/L , the initial size of the diode-connected MOSFET	220
9.3 Initial Simulation and Analysis	220
9.4 Pump Performance Characterization	228
9.4.1 Pump efficiency calculation	228
9.4.2 Pump I-V characteristics	231
9.4.3 Pump output current versus pump clock frequency	232
9.4.4 Pump output current versus MOSFET sizes	233
9.4.5 Pump output current versus clock driver size	234
9.4.6 Design summary	235
9.5 Conclusion	236
Index	239

Preface

Charge pumps are finding increased attention and novel diversified usage in the new era of nanometer-generation chips used in different systems, specifically those incorporating nonvolatile memory. Many of the present and future nanometer-generation chips' performance depend heavily on the ability to efficiently generate high voltages on-chip while meeting stringent power and area requirements. And yet, charge pump design, being purely analog in nature and involving high voltage, needs meticulous design techniques, intensive semiconductor device analysis, careful design layout planning, and accurate parasitic extraction process to produce excellent results in real implementation on silicon.

This book is a product of our years of quest for a practical book on charge pump circuit design. Having made significant contributions in different successful projects at various companies, we have always felt the need for a book on the topic of charge pump design. From our early days we constantly felt the challenge of working on a subject where there are no books and our sources of information were limited to only a few pages of description on various text books and different IEEE-published papers and journals. Most of these documents, while giving us skeletal ideas about the basic architecture and enhancements of charge pumps, did nothing to guide us intricately through different design conceptions and implementation processes. Charge pump, being a pure analog design, carries an inherent risk of unanticipated effects, which when overlooked can significantly reduce circuit performance or cripple the circuit operation.

Both of us have individually looked for books or materials on this topic and asked colleagues and veterans for any published materials, but we soon found out that everyone wished there was a book on this particular topic. By writing this book we have tried to bring our combined personal design experiences along with the knowledge assimilated from our study of different journals and research papers. This book covers the basics of charge pump circuits in detail and provides a thorough mathematical derivation and analysis of charge pump operation. It also strives

x Preface

to explain the different aspects for an excellent charge pump design, and explains each step in detail. Every effort has been made to provide enough hands-on design information, potential pitfalls to avoid, and practical ideas harnessed from our years of designing charge pumps, which are being used in many chips, finding mass scale adoption.

This book assumes a basic knowledge of semiconductor device physics and MOSFET operation and is targeted toward almost every semiconductor chip design engineer who is involved in analog circuit design and memory circuit design. The book takes a relatively novice reader through various aspects and gives sufficient information to enable him or her to complete their design from conception to actual layout implementation. Further audiences include systems designers and board level integrators. Also this book should be essentially helpful to almost all electrical engineering professors and students at all levels.

This book is organized into nine chapters. Chapter 1 starts with a history of charge pump evolution from the Noble award winning work of Cockcroft and Walton to the eventual adaptation of John F. Dickson. Chapter 2 is intended for a quick refresh of basic MOS device physics and different second order effects relevant to charge pump operation. It also discusses SPICE simulators and BSIM models while providing suggestions to avoid the dreaded SPICE convergence issue. Chapter 3 dives straight into the heart of charge pump operation and quantitatively analyzes the pump characteristics. Chapter 4 is where the basic implementation details are discussed along with different charge pump controlling blocks. It analyzes the different pump regulation schemes and quantifies them. Chapter 5, a prelude to Chapter 9, introduces the different parameters for charge pump specifications and discusses various implementation details. Now, once the basic operation of a 2-phase charge pump and its many characteristics and specifications have been understood, Chapter 6 takes it to the next level and discusses how to design a better charge pump. Chapter 7 discusses various charge pump architectures, such as the modified 2-phase charge pump, the 4-phase charge pump, and the CTS charge pump. Chapter 8 provides future design references and discusses different circuit and system effects that affect the performance of the pump. Finally, Chapter 9 provides a practical design example and discusses the influence of different parameters while analyzing the characteristics of a charge pump.

It is believed that if the reader applies appropriate techniques, which have been presented here, he or she should be able to design charge pumps that meet design and performance specifications and produce excellent operating circuits on silicon.

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Feng Pan

Writing this book began with a lot of energy and excitement. However, after about six months of persistent writing, drawing, and revising, while meeting tough deadlines, schedules, and surprises at the office, we reached midway in the book and immediately began to feel the streaks of insanity, realizing that the book will never finish on time. It was only through the continued efforts, support, and help of many outstanding individuals that we were able to complete this book.

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Tapan Samaddar

Introduction

The approaching nanometer generation of large-scale integrated (LSI) circuits requires power-supply voltages of less than 2 V to enable low-power operation and increased battery life. In addition, because low-power technology has become a primary target for the mainstream LSI designs to meet with the nomadic computing era, oxide thickness, transistor dimensions, and voltage-scaling approaches that are most effective for low power are accelerating and spreading at an unprecedented pace. Therefore, low-voltage circuit technologies for processors, memory, and analog circuits are intensively being investigated.

Many of the system blocks—such as EEPROMs, Flash memories, power management blocks, audio and video codecs, image sensor circuits, and displays—require internal voltages higher than the system supply voltage. This internal high-voltage supply needs to be generated in-system or on-chip. The traditional approach of switch-capacitor circuits or inductor-based linear regulators consumes too much power and silicon area to justify today's shrinking needs. An on-chip charge pump design provides an excellent solution and eliminates the need for an inductor. Having no inductor alleviates any potential electromagnetic-interference concerns that could have an impact on sensitive RF receivers or wireless chipsets. Another advantage is to reduce the cost of using discrete off-chip components. The charge pump solution eliminates the need for DC/DC boost converters and expensive low-profile inductors that are required to meet the size limitations of handheld devices and cellphones.

The advent of personal information devices, digital cameras, and MP3 players has fuelled a boom for nonvolatile memories, particularly Flash memories, because of their high-density, moderate power consumption and high endurance for mechanical shock and vibration. Solid state memories, such as Flash, contain no moving parts and allow for easy and fast data storage. EEPROMs and Flash memory have been some of the biggest drivers to create better and efficient charge pumps. Even though the supply voltage is decreasing, a Flash memory will still need a high internal programming/erase voltage, up to 30 V, regardless of the

xiv Introduction

power supply trend, and this voltage also needs to be controlled precisely to achieve a narrow deviation in the threshold voltages of its memory-cell transistors.

A familiar problem in system engineering is the subsystem whose power requirements are not met by the main power supply. In such cases, the available supply rails are not directly usable, nor is the direct use of battery voltage (when available) always an option. Lack of space can prevent inclusion of the optimal number of batteries, and in other cases the gradually declining voltage of a discharging battery is not acceptable for the application. Voltage converters can generate the desired voltage levels, and charge pumps are often the best choice for these applications requiring some combination of low power, simplicity, and low cost. Charge pumps are easy to use, because they require no expensive inductors or additional discrete components. Further, charge pumps can be the only option for certain applications, such as those in telecom applications, which require generating +5 V from the available -48 V.

With the increasing popularity of color LCD displays in cellphones, PDAs, and digital cameras, white LEDs are becoming popular illumination sources. Whereas monochrome displays can use colored light sources, such as electroluminescent backlights or colored LEDs, color displays require a white light source to properly display color. The ubiquitous red and green LEDs have a typical forward-voltage drop of about 1.6 V to 2.4 V and can be driven by a simple battery pack. White LEDs, however, typically have a forward-voltage drop of 3 V to 4 V and are more likely to need a separate power supply. The traditional direct LED drivers and inductor-based boost converters have their own limitations. Charge pumps are increasingly finding ground in these applications due to their better performance—they provide the smallest and lowest-cost solution because they rely only on small capacitors for high voltage generation. As video features become more integrated into mobile phone use, improvements in power consumption for LCD backlighting are essential for the maintenance and improvement of overall battery life. Chip vendors competing for a share of this red-hot white LED driver market are pitching advanced charge pump sources that deliver greater backlighting power for the color displays in larger and more complex portable/wireless devices.

Therefore, much of the present and future chip performance will depend heavily on the ability to efficiently generate high voltages on-chip while meeting stringent power and area requirements. And yet, charge pumps, being purely analog in nature and involving high voltage, need meticulous design techniques, intensive semiconductor device analysis, careful design layout planning, and an accurate parasitic extraction process to produce excellent results in real implementation on silicon.

To summarize, charge pumps are finding increased attention and novel diversified usage in the new era of nanometer-generation chips used in

different systems. This book strives to explain the different aspects for an excellent charge pump design, and explains each step in detail. It is full of extra hands-on design information, potential pitfalls to avoid, and practical ideas harnessed from the authors' years of charge pump design experience, which are currently being used in many chips, finding mass scale adoption.

