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Practical RF Amplifier Design Using the Available Gain Procedure And the Advanced Design System EM/Circuit Co-Simulation Capability





Introduction

- \checkmark Focus on design flow rather than in-depth simulation setup overview.
- ✓ Vendor Supplied Design Information Importance (S-Parameters and Nonlinear Model)
- ✓ Use of ADS Momentum/Circuit Co-Simulation
- \checkmark Use of ADS Design Guides to Speed Design Process
- ✓ Measured Versus Modeled
- ✓ Goal: One-Pass Design Process

802.11b Amplifier Design Requirements

- Frequency Range: 2.4GHz to 2.48GHz
- Gain: >12dB
- Noise Figure: <2.5dB
- Input Return Loss: >10dB
- Output Return Loss: >10dB
- Third Order Input Intercept Point: >0dBm
- Supply Current: <100mA



Nonlinear Model Bias and DC Simulation I Probe DC Idrain R DC Rd DC1 R=5 Ohm Vd DC Feed V DC DC Feed1 R SRC1 Ra Rg Vdc=3.3 V R=10 kOhm_G R=33 kOhm S2 Latest ATF54143 R Rb R=6.8 kOhm

freq

0.0000 Hz

• The Avago ATF54143 has measured s-parameter and noise parameter data at various bias conditions including a 3.0V V_{DS} and 60mA I_{DS}. The nonlinear model is biased at the same DC operating point as was the device for the measured s-parameter data provided by Avago. The ATF54143 is an enhancement mode FET that requires a positive gate voltage with respect to its source to obtain the desired drain-to-source bias current of 60mA.

ATF54143model

Vd

2.993 V

X1

61.38 mA

Idrain.i

• A voltage divider network is provided by Ra and Rb and is adjusted in the simulator to quickly obtain the required 60mA drain-to-source current.



Nonlinear Model Generated S-Parameter Data



- DC blocking capacitors and 50Ω terminations are added to the DC biased nonlinear circuit input and output to obtain nonlinear model generated S-parameters from 100MHz to 6GHz with a frequency step of 10MHz.
- S-parameter data is obtained from 100MHz to 6GHz with a frequency step of 10MHz.



Nonlinear Model Versus Measured S-Parameters



Nonlinear model generated s-parameters and the Avago measured s-parameter data closely match.



S-Parameter Data Validation



• An Intercontinental Microwave transistor test fixture with the appropriate midsection is used to measure transistor S-parameters.

• Before calibration is performed, all TOSL-3001 calibration coefficients are loaded into the network analyzer. Limit network analyzer source power to –25dBm.

• The HP4142B DC Source/Monitor is connected to the E8364B network analyzer bias tees located on the back of that instrument to bias the transistor at 3.0V $V_{\rm DS}$ and 60mA $I_{\rm DS}.$



Lab Measured Versus Avago S-Parameters



Avago measured s-parameters, nonlinear model generated s-parameters, and the lab measured s-parameters are in close agreement with each other.



ATF54143 Transistor Stability Analysis

S-Parameters, Noise Figure, Gain, Stability, Circles, and Group Delay versus Frequency



• It is highly recommended that the amplifier circuit is made unconditionally stable at all frequencies to ensure that it does not produce unwanted oscillations.

• An ADS Amplifier Design Guide quickly calculates and displays circuit stability.



Transistor Stability Results – Potentially Unstable



• To achieve unconditional stability, the circuit must have K \geq 1 and {| Δ |<1 or B1>0 or B2>0}; or separately geometric stability factors $\mu_{source} \geq$ 1 or $\mu_{load} \geq$ 1.

- Observation of the Stability Factor K, geometric stability factors μ_{source} and μ_{load} indicate potential instability below 4GHz and marginal unconditional stability above 4GHz.
- One way to ensure stability as far as environmental conditions are concerned is to provide significant margin to the stability conditions. In other words, make K>>1 at all frequencies.
- It is important to stabilize this device and obtain unconditional stability at all frequencies.





Stabilizing the Potentially Unstable Transistor

 Transistors are stabilized through the use of series and parallel feedback and series and parallel loading at the input and output. A combination of these networks may be necessary to get the desired stability results. Since this amplifier is used in a low noise application, it is desirable to limit loss at the device input at the operating frequency, which degrades amplifier noise figure.



Stabilizing the Potentially Unstable Transistor

• Capacitor CIN is changed to 0.5pF to limit input loading at the operating frequency since loss added at the input degrades noise figure. The 0.5pF capacitor has a relatively high reactance at 2.5GHz and this reactance decreases with an increase in frequency. This allows input parallel loading at higher frequencies and very little loading at 2.5GHz.

• The resistive feedback helps stabilize the circuit at low frequencies and has little impact at the operating frequency.

• The optimization goals are set to optimize for stability, maximum gain, and minimum noise figure.

• Stability goals OptimGoal1 and OptimGoal2 are set to a Min=1.05 as a default over the entire simulation frequency range. These goals ensure that $\mu_{\text{source}} \ge 1$ and $\mu_{\text{load}} \ge 1$, which indicates unconditional stability.

• OptimGoal3 is set to a Min=14dB for dB(S21) over the 2.4GHz to 2.5GHz operating frequency range.

- The noise figure goal is set to a Max=1.5dB from 2.4GHz to 2.5GHz.
- Optimized component values: Rfb=547 Ω , Rin=279 Ω , RSout=6 Ω , Rout=216 Ω .





- Observation of geometric stability factors μ_{source} and μ_{load} indicates unconditional stability at all frequencies since $\mu_{\text{source}}{\geq}1$ or $\mu_{\text{load}}{\geq}1$.
- Preliminary optimized circuit performance: Gain=14.2dB, Minimum Noise Figure=1dB.
- Typically, if the preliminary analysis does not meet the design criteria, then the final circuit with parasitics doesn't meet the objectives. In other words, parasitics typically degrade RF performance.





- Component parasitics include loss and unexpected reactance.
- An equivalent circuit model of a Coilcraft Midi series air-wound inductor replaces the ideal DC feed. Ideally, a very large inductance is needed for the DC feed coil. Inductor parasitic capacitance limits the allowable inductance value due to self-resonance. A Coilcraft Midi Series 27nH inductor has a 2.7GHz minimum self-resonant frequency.





• Both |S11| and |S22| are inside the unit radius Smith chart, which is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for unconditional stability.

• The 50 Ω gain of 13.82dB is slightly lower than the original 14.17dB because of resistors changed to standard values and the additional loss added by the inductor.





• An arbitrary value of 1nH in the transistor source ground return path is used to get an indication on how sensitive the circuit is to parasitic ground inductance.

• Higher values of transistor source or emitter lead ground inductance are not uncommon in PCB layouts.





• The |S11| is outside the unit radius Smith chart indicating an input reflection coefficient magnitude greater than unity. Small amounts of parasitic ground inductance make this circuit potentially unstable at some frequencies.

• The dB(S21) plot shows the 50 Ω gain at 2.5GHz is reduced from 13.82dB to 7.48dB.



• Layout parasitics that can wreak havoc on RF circuit performance include ground or lead inductance and parasitic capacitance on the signal path. Minute amounts of ground or lead inductance can cause a calculated unconditionally stable circuit to become unstable.

• Layout for this circuit is critical with respect to the parasitic ground inductance.

- Since the input reflection coefficient magnitude is greater than unity, a stability analysis is not necessary to determine whether or not the amplifier has a propensity to oscillate.
- Ground inductance causes circuit gain to be significantly less than gain predicted with ideal s-parameter simulations.
- The stability networks need to load the circuit more out-of-band in case the layout parasitic ground inductance is not low enough.
- There is no way to totally eliminate the ground inductance, thus, more loading may be required for stability margin.
- Since the transistor high input reflection coefficient is causing the problem, loading the output has little affect on stability for this circuit.
- Every effort is made to minimize layout ground inductance so the amplifier meets the gain requirement and does not oscillate.





• The input reflection coefficient plotted on an admittance plane Smith chart. The marker is moved to a location on the trace that has the highest value of negative conductance. The reciprocal of the conductance gives the additional parallel load necessary to move the input reflection coefficient to the edge of the Smith chart. This provides little stability margin. Currently, the input is loaded with a parallel 240 Ω resistor at high frequencies.

• An additional parallel input load of 200Ω moves the input reflection coefficient to the edge of the Smith chart. This gives a total required parallel resistance of 109Ω to move the input reflection coefficient to the Smith chart edge. This gives no stability margin.





• A 50 Ω parallel load resistor should give good stability margin.

• The 50 Ω gain is 7.47dB which is only 0.01dB less than the case with the 240 Ω input parallel resistive load. This shows that the input loading has little affect on the circuit at 2.5GHz due to the 0.5pF capacitor being used as the bypass, but has a huge affect at higher frequencies





• Since both input and output reflection coefficient magnitudes remain less than unity when the circuit input and output is terminated with 50 Ω , a stability analysis is now performed.

S-Parameters, Noise Figure, Gain, Stability, Circles, and Group Delay versus Frequency



• The stability analysis is set up using an ADS Amplifier Design Guide.





• The circuit indicates potential instability between 6GHz and 9.5GHz as shown in the red box since μ_{source} <1 and μ_{load} <1.

• Before making any further adjustments to stabilizing networks, the parasitic ground inductance is adjusted down to 0.5nH. The 1nH value was arbitrarily chosen to begin with, so it is helpful to see how sensitive the circuit is when the parasitic ground inductance is cut in half.



S-Parameters, Noise Figure, Gain, Stability, Circles, and Group Delay versus Frequency



The parasitic ground inductance is set to 0.5nH.



Agilent Technologies Procedure and the Co-4



• K, μ_{source} , and μ_{load} are plotted and indicate unconditional stability from 100MHz to 18GHz with more stability margin at higher frequencies as desired.

• At this stage of the design, it is not yet known how much parasitic ground inductance is contained in the PCB layout. Special attention is given to the layout procedure to ensure that parasitic ground inductance is kept as low as possible.

• The stability plots show three spikes over the 100MHz to 18GHz frequency range. The transmission line used in the Coilcraft 27nH inductor model causes these spikes. The actual Coilcraft inductor does not behave as suggested by the model above its self-resonance frequency.



S-Parameters, Noise Figure, Gain, Stability, Circles, and Group Delay versus Frequency



• A one-port measurement of the inductor is saved to a touchstone file named Lp1812SMS_27NG. This one-port measured data file is now used in the simulation to more accurately predict the behavior above the self-resonant frequency of the inductor up to 6GHz and eliminate the "data spikes".





The inductor primary self-resonant frequency response is still noticeable in the amplifier frequency response plots as expected, although it is not as pronounced.



Maximum Available Gain with PCB Parasitics



• Maximum Available Gain is displayed and highlighted. The predicted maximum possible gain is around 10.8dB. This is 1.2dB below the 12dB design goal. Note that this predicted gain value is obtained with an arbitrary estimated 0.5nH of parasitic ground inductance.

• Although the gain is below the target value in these simulations, the gain without parasitic inductance is well above the target value.

• The amplifier circuit is laid out with special attention to grounding the FET source.





• The amplifier is built on Arlon 25N, which is available in many standard laminate thicknesses. Arlon 25N has a dielectric constant of 3.38 and a loss tangent of about .0023 at 2.5GHz.

• Double-sided laminate having 1 once copper on each side, with a 30±3mil thickness is selected for the design.

- EM simulations are performed so PCB effects can be included in the circuit analysis.
- Each layout node is simulated individually and results later combined with circuit analysis to include PCB effects.





• For the EM analysis, the substrate is first defined using the Arlon 25N material properties and simulated from 10MHz to 10GHz. Once the substrate is computed, it is used for all PCB parasitic simulations.

• Each RF critical layout node is simulated individually and results combined with a circuit analysis to include PCB effects. The EM/Circuit Co-Simulation feature in ADS is then employed to combine the EM results with the circuit simulation.

• The footprint pad of the 27nH choke inductor is quite large on Node 3 and adds parasitic capacitance, which in turn, lowers the inductive self-resonant frequency. Since there would be a substantial amount of parasitic capacitance on this pad, it was decided that the ground plane would be removed from beneath this pad on the bottom layer.





- An estimate of parasitic ground inductance on the transistor source leads is simulated.
- The transistor has two source leads that are connected internally to each other. For the parasitic ground inductance estimate, an EM simulation is performed at the connection point of each transistor source lead on the PCB.
- Since the transistor s-parameter data uses a two-port representation that has only one ground reference, the inductance value estimates for the two lead connections are combined as parallel inductances to obtain one parasitic ground inductance value.
- Inductive reactance is $j(50 \times 0.017)=j0.85$, which is less than half of the parasitic inductive reactance from the first case, as shown on the Smith chart marker readout.





• Inductive reactance is $j(50 \times 0.0505)=j2.526$ as shown on the Smith chart marker readout.

• The two calculated inductance values of 0.05447nH and 0.1608nH are now put in parallel to obtain an estimate of parasitic inductance. Note that putting the inductance values in parallel with each other is a very crude approach, but will likely give a decent ballpark estimate of parasitic ground inductance. Putting the inductances in parallel yields an estimated parasitic ground inductance of 0.045nH.

• An alternate approach to putting the inductance values in parallel would be to use the nonlinear model for the simulation since it includes both source leads.



 Agilent Technologies
 Practical RF Amplifier Design Using the Available Gain

 Procedure and the Advanced Design System EM/Circuit
 Co-Simulation Capability



- The PCB layout node of each PCB layout trace is combined with the circuit component models and measured data to EM/Circuit Co-Simulate the entire circuit with layout parasitics.
- Measured data for the 0.1uF capacitor is included for the DC blocking capacitors and DC bypassing capacitors.





Note that the input matching network is not yet included in the schematic. It is useful to analyze amplifier stability results without matching networks since matching networks can decouple the gain block from the measurement system at some frequencies when series reactances increase toward infinity.



Stability with PCB Using EM/Circuit Co-Simulation





Stability with PCB Using EM/Circuit Co-Simulation



• The stability analysis is limited from 100MHz to 6GHz since the choke inductor measured data is limited to 6GHz.

• Note that $\mu_{Source} \ge 1$ and $\mu_{Load} \ge 1$ for all frequencies from 100MHz to 6GHz, either of which, guarantee unconditional stability over that frequency range.



Maximum Gain/Minimum Noise Figure



- Maximum Available Gain is 15.6dB if the input and output is presented with simultaneous conjugate match terminations.
- Minimum Noise Figure is 1.2dB if the input is presented with Γ_{opt} .



Available Gain Design Procedure



Available gain circles are plotted with noise circles. The minimum noise figure, NFmin, is 1.23dB. The first noise circle is 0.2dB higher than NFmin, or 1.4dB. The 1.4dB noise circle passes right through Γ_{MS} , the simultaneous conjugate input match. Thus, the marker is moved to the 1.4dB noise figure circle at Γ_{MS} .



Available Gain Design Procedure



The marker readout shows the impedance that must be presented to the amplifier input to achieve 1.42dB noise figure and 15.6dB of gain. The 18.338-j14.722 impedance is what the amplifier input "wants to see" to obtain these results. It is also assumed that the output will be conjugately matched when the amplifier input is terminated with this impedance. In reality, the amplifier output doesn't require much output matching since it's output reflection coefficient is already pretty low. Thus, the last step of the available gain design procedure, which is to conjugately match the output for the given source termination, will not be executed. The expected gain of 15.6dB will not be reached, but will be reduced by a very small amount.





The input match must transform 50Ω to 18.338-j14.722 at 2.5GHz. An ADS Matching Design Guide is used to develop the matching network. The Design Guide assumes that one impedance is being matched to another impedance, whereas, the marker readout on the previous slide is what the amplifier input "wants to see". Notice how the reference is changed from what the amplifier "wants to see" at its input to how the ADS Matching

Network Design Guide is configured.











- The Smith charts indicate both the input and output are well matched at 2.5GHz.
- The numeric gain on the S21 polar chart at 2.5GHz is 5.53, which converts to 14.85dB.
- (The inductor is not connected to the inductor pad from the Node1 EM simulation since the first Node1 EM simulation is a one-port s-parameter dataset.)





freq	nf(2)
100.0 MHz	46.633
200.0 MHz	34.725
300.0 MHz	27.837
400.0 MHz	23.017
500.0 MHz	19.338
600.0 MHz	16.396
700.0 MHz	13.968
800.0 MHz	11.931
900.0 MHz	10.002
1.000 GHz	8.925
1.000 GHz	7.709
1.300 GHz	6.655
1.300 GHz	5.739
1.600 GHz	4.944
1.700 GHz	4.257
1.800 GHz	3.669
2.000 GHz	3.169
2.100 GHz	2.752
2.100 GHz	2.410
2.100 GHz	2.151
2.000 GHz	1.937
2.000 GHz	1.776
2.400 GHz	1.599
2.500 GHz	1.562
2.600 GHz	1.562
2.700 GHz	1.593
2.800 GHz	1.650
2.900 GHz	1.730
3.000 GHz	1.829

- A gain of 15.15dB at 2.4GHz is plotted on the rectangular plot. A 20dB input return loss and 10dB output return loss are also plotted.
- The predicted noise figure with the input match is 1.6dB at 2.4GHz and 1.56dB at 2.5GHz.





- A 2.4nH Coilcraft airwound inductor is available for the input matching network.
- The lumped equivalent 2.4nH Coilcraft inductor replaces the L3 ideal inductor.
- S11 and S22 Smith chart plots indicate that both input and output are very well matched.

freq	nf(2)
100.0 MHz 200.0 MHz 300.0 MHz 500.0 MHz 500.0 MHz 600.0 MHz 700.0 MHz 900.0 MHz 1.000 GHz 1.100 GHz 1.200 GHz 1.300 GHz 1.600 GHz 1.600 GHz 1.800 GHz 1.900 GHz 2.000 GHz 2.000 GHz 2.200 GHz 2.200 GHz 2.200 GHz	46.297 34.385 27.488 22.656 18.964 16.007 13.565 11.513 9.574 8.483 7.261 6.206 5.296 4.514 3.848 3.288 2.825 2.451 2.157 1.950 1.788 1.681 1.622
2.400 GHz	1.605
2.500 GHz	1.616
2.600 GHZ	1.658
2.700 GHz	1.726
2.800 GHz	1.816
2.900 GHz	1.924
3.000 GHz	2.046

• The input return loss with the inductor model plotted in Figure 59 shows a slight degradation from 20dB to 17.6dB.

- The 15.14dB gain is unaffected by the slight input return loss degradation.
- The 2.4nH coil loss slightly degrades noise figure to 1.62dB.

- The Node1 one-port s-parameter EM simulated dataset is replaced by the two-port sparameter data so that the lumped equivalent circuit model is connected correctly to the PCB trace pad.
- The 2.4nH Coil Craft equivalent circuit model is replaced by one-port measured data.

Available Gain Design Procedure (Input Match) 6 S(1,1) S(2,2) m3 m2 m2 m3 freq=2.450GHz \$(2,2)=0.214 / -103.262 impedance = Z0 * (0.834 - j0.364) freq=2.450GHz \$(1,1)=0.238 / -70.633 impedance = Z0 * (1.050 - j0.500) freq (1.300GHz to 6.000GHz) freq (1.300GHz to 6.000GHz) S(2,1) S(1,2) -0.10 -0.08 -0.06 -0.04 -0.02 0.00 0.02 0.04 0.06 0.08 0.10 freq (1.300GHz to 6.000GHz) freq (1.300GHz to 6.000GHz)

The measured data for the 2.4nH input matching inductor indicates that the lumped equivalent model under-estimates loss of the actual inductor since gain degrades from 15.137dB to 14.65dB and noise figure degrades from 1.6dB to 1.78dB at 2.5GHz.

freq	nf(2)
2.370 GHz 2.380 GHz 2.390 GHz 2.400 GHz 2.410 GHz 2.420 GHz 2.430 GHz 2.440 GHz 2.440 GHz 2.460 GHz 2.460 GHz 2.470 GHz 2.490 GHz 2.500 GHz 2.500 GHz 2.510 GHz 2.550 GHz 2.550 GHz 2.550 GHz 2.550 GHz 2.560 GHz 2.560 GHz 2.590 GHz 2.600 GHz 2.600 GHz 2.600 GHz 2.630 GHz 2.630 GHz	1.725 1.729 1.730 1.731 1.736 1.738 1.743 1.743 1.743 1.743 1.743 1.753 1.753 1.753 1.763 1.763 1.763 1.763 1.763 1.763 1.774 1.779 1.785 1.792 1.792 1.806 1.815 1.821 1.831 1.840 1.846 1.853 1.864 1.853

Input return loss degrades from 17.6dB to 12.7dB using the inductor measured data versus the equivalent circuit model.

Amplifier Nonlinear Analysis (IMD)

- A third order intermodulation distortion simulation is configured using the ADS Amplifier Design Guide.
- The 60 ATF54143 two-port s-parameter data is replaced in the parasitic model by the biased non-linear model.
- The red box displays a simulated third order input intercept point of 7dBm.

Simulation Results Vs. Specification Requirements

	Specification Requirement	Simulated Value
Frequency Range	2.4GHz to 2.48GHz	2.4GHz to 2.48GHz
Gain	>12dB	14.65dB
Noise Figure	<2.5dB	1.78dB
IP3i	>0dBm	7dBm
Input Return Loss	>10dB	12.7dB
Output Return Loss	>10dB	13.6dB
Current Drain	<100mA	61.38mA
Supply Voltage	3.3V	3.3V
Stability	Unconditional	Unconditional

• The simulated amplifier that includes PCB layout and component parasitics meets all amplifier design requirements.

• Since the simulated amplifier with all PCB layout and component parasitics meets or exceeds the specification requirements, the amplifier PCB is fabricated.

Arlon 25N Microstrip TRL Calibration Kit

- Linecalc is used to design the TRL calibration standards.
- The amplifier input and output 50Ω transmission lines are 250mils long, thus, the Open standard is also 250mils long. The zero length Thru is 500mils long.

• The TRL calibration Line 1 standard is designed to cover up to 6GHz. The electrical length of the line standard is valid from 30° to 150°. Thus, the Line 1 standard should be no longer electrically than 150° at 6GHz. the Line 1 standard is the 500mil electrical length of the zero length Thru standard plus the additional Line 1 length of 500mils, yielding a total Line 1 length of 1000mils.

Arlon 25N Microstrip TRL Calibration Kit

Standard Class Assignments					Calibratio	n Kit	Arlon25N	
CLASS	Α	В	C	D	Е	F	G	Standard Class Label
S ₁₁ A	1							Open
S ₁₁ B								
S ₁₁ C	3							Load
S ₂₂ A	1							Open
S ₂₂ B								
S ₂₂ C	3							Load
Forward Transmission	2							Thru
Reverse Transmission	2							Thru
Forward Match	2							Thru
Reverse Match	2							Thru
Response								
Response & Isolation	3							Isoln Std
TRL Thru	2							Thru
TRL Reflect	1							Open
TRL Line	4	5	6	7	8	9		Lines
Adapter								
			TRL Op	tion				
	Cal Z ₀	•	System	Z ₀	_XLine	Z ₀		
	Set R	ef:	X Thru		Refl	ect		

Arlon 25N Microstrip TRL Calibration Kit

Calibration Kit ___ Arlon25N

STA	NDARD	C0 10 ⁻¹⁵ F	C1 10 ⁻²⁷ F/Hz	C2 10 ⁻³⁶ F/Hz ²	C3 10 ⁻⁴⁵ F/Hz ³	Fixed or	Terminal	Offset		Frequency (GHz)		Coax or Standard		
#	TYPE	L0 10 ⁻¹² H	L1 10 ⁻²⁴ H/Hz	L2 10 ⁻³³ H/Hz ²	L3 10 ⁻⁴² H/Hz ³	Sliding	Sliding Ω	Delay pSec	Ζ ₀ Ω	Loss GΩ/s	MIN	MAX	Waveguide	Label
1	Open	0	0	0	0		50	0	50		0.2	20		Open
2	Thru						50	0	50		0.2	20		Thru
3	Load					Fixed	50	0	50		0.2	20		Load
4	Line 1						50	69.1	50		1.3	6		1.3-6 Line
5	Line 2						50	207.31	50		0.4	2		0.4-2 Line
6	Line 3						50	19.348	50		4.5	20		4.5-20 Line
7	Line 4						50	20.177	50		4.2	20		4.2-20 Line
8	Line 5						50	96.74	50		0.87	4.3		0.87-4.3 Line
9	Line 6						50	428.42	50		0.2	0.97		0.2-0.97 Line
10														

• The lowest frequency for the Line 1 standard that yields an electrical length of 30° is just above 1.2GHz, therefore 1.3GHz is used as the Line 1 standard lower frequency limit. Therefore, the Line 1 standard, which is physically 500mils long, covers a frequency range of 1.3GHz to 6GHz.

- The electrical delay of the Line 1 standard is 69.1pSec.
- Calibration coefficients from the table are entered into the network analyzer. The amplifier and TRL calibration standards are fabricated. The network analyzer is now calibrated using the Arlon 25N TRL calibration kit using the Line 1 standard. This allows a calibration over the frequency range from 1.3GHz to 6GHz.

Fabricated Amplifier and TRL Calibration Kit

The amplifier and TRL calibration standards are fabricated on Arlon 25N 30mil thick PCB laminate.

Amplifier S-Parameter Measurements Using TRL

• The amplifier input matching network is not yet placed on the PCB. A DC blocking capacitor is used at the input instead of the 1.6pF matching capacitor in order to measure the amplifier s- parameters without the input matching network. This allows a stability measurement over a wider range of frequencies.

• Calibration coefficients are entered into the network analyzer. The network analyzer is calibrated using the Arlon 25N TRL calibration kit with the Line 1 standard. This allows a calibration from 1.3GHz to 6GHz.

Amplifier S-Parameter Measurements Using TRL

Measured Stability

S-Parameters, Noise Figure, Gain, Stability, Circles, and Group Delay versus Frequency

The ADS design guide allows a stability analysis on the measured s-parameter data from 1.3GHz to 6GHz.

Measured Stability

• $\mu_{\text{Source}} \ge 1$ and $\mu_{\text{Load}} \ge 1$ for all frequencies from 1.3GHz to 6GHz, either of which, guarantee unconditional stability over that frequency range. Thus, the measured s-parameters indicate unconditional stability from 1.3GHz to 6GHz.

Measured Versus Modeled S-Parameters

Measured Versus Modeled

Good agreement is shown between the two results, particularly where the 27nH bias inductor is below it's self-resonant frequency. Measured gain at 2.5GHz is 13.26dB whereas the model predicts 14.2dB. Gain is very sensitive to source terminal ground inductance shown by previous analysis. Source terminal inductance was analyzed with EM simulation for both transistor source terminals. Then, these two inductances were combined in parallel to use in the circuit simulation. Some method of combining the two inductances is necessary since an s-parameter linear component in ADS has only one ground reference terminal. The input reflection coefficient at 2.5GHz is slightly higher for the measured amplifier versus the simulated amplifier. This accounts for a portion of the measured amplifier lower gain versus the simulated amplifier in the unmatched case. The method of combining parasitic transistor source terminal inductance and the higher input reflection coefficient of the measured amplifier of the measured amplifier easily leads to the gain discrepancy between modeled and measured results. Note that the measured amplifier exceeds the 12dB gain requirement.

Complete Amplifier Measured S-Parameters

blocking capacitor C5 at the amplifier input and replacing it with the 1.6pF matching capacitor and adding the 2.4nH Coil Craft air wound inductor at location L3. The complete amplifier with the input matching network is re-measured and re-simulated.

Complete Amplifier Measured S-Parameters

The measured gain of 13.62dB is shown along with an input return loss of 9.7dB and an output return loss of 13.6dB. The measured gain is slightly below the simulated value (14.2dB) as was the case for the unmatched gain case because of the method used to estimate source ground parasitic inductance. The actual gain exceeds the 12dB specification requirement with margin, and is therefore acceptable. Note that the input return loss of 9.7dB marginally fails to the 10dB specification requirement, but will also be accepted in this particular design since the input return loss is considered to be a "soft" or negotiable specification. The output return loss of 13.64dB exceeds the 10dB goal with some margin.

Measured Versus Modeled

The plots show a close agreement between simulated and measured data.

Measured Versus Modeled

	Specification Requirement	Simulated Value	Measured Value
Frequency Range	2.4GHz to 2.48GHz	2.4GHz to 2.48GHz	2.4GHz to 2.48GHz
Gain	>12dB	14.65dB	13.62dB
Noise Figure	<2.5dB	1.78dB	1.91dB
IP3i	>0dBm	7dBm	13.7dBm
Input Return Loss	>10dB	12.7dB	9.7dB
Output Return Loss	>10dB	13.6dB	13.6dB
Current Drain	<100mA	61.38mA	63mA
Supply Voltage	3.3V	3.3V	3.3V
Stability	Unconditional	Unconditional	Unconditional

Conclusion

• Close agreement is obtained between the modeled and measured amplifier.

• A one-pass design was successful although design improvements may be possible. The goal was to design the circuit with the simulator, build the circuit, and have it meet all design goals without requiring PCB layout changes. This circuit met or exceeded all design goals.

• The gain of the actual amplifier was a bit lower than the model. This discrepancy is most likely due to the way the ground-return inductance was simulated.

• EM/Circuit Co-Simulation time is minimized since only the critical RF nodes are included in the EM portion of the analysis.

• Time and money are saved on the amplifier design process since multiple PCB passes are avoided by use of the simulation tools.

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