

Embedded Bluetooth module VS USB dongle

Source: <http://coding.derkeiler.com/Archive/General/comp.arch.embedded/2007-03/msg00739.html>

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 - *Date:* Thu, 15 Mar 2007 19:00:04 +0000
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I'm currently running an embedded (OK, a small) PC that collects data from the parallel port and sends them via bluetooth to a central machine. I'm considering changing to a 'real' embedded device, partly because I'd like the experience, partly because the power consumption of the PC is too high for the job it does and mostly because it's too big.

The basic configuration I've sketched out on the back of the proverbial envelope is a PIC 18F4550 (I'm already familiar with PICs and I've got some of these chips) with an FTDI Vinculum chip hosting a USB Bluetooth device because the Bluetooth USB dongles are considerably cheaper than OEM Bluetooth dongles although all of the dongles I've pulled apart have had a module fitted to a base board.

My question is, would it be *much* easier to use a BT module than the dongle, I may want to be able to attach more storage in the future so I can log data outside the range of Blue tooth so the FTDI chip looks nice from the point of being able to attach a simple USB flash device as well although I could just attach an SD/MMC card to the PIC.

If the dongle route is 'do-able' Can anyone point me to any documentation that would give me an idea of what's involved in driving a USB Bluetooth dongle? In fact, even if it's not, I'd still like some kind of idea of what's involved even if I don't end up using the information straight away.

Obviously, if the USB dongle route is stupidly difficult compared to the oem module I'd be open to recommendations for a module with good code examples and/or good documentation.

Thanks in advance.

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