

Introduction To VPX

VITA 46, 48, and 65: The Next Generation VME system replacement





What is VPX?	3
What do I need to know from VITA 46.0?	3
Power and Control Signals	5
P1 Connections	6
What are these VITA 46 “dot” standards I keep hearing about?	6
How do the VPX Modules connect on the Backplane?	7
What is VPX REDI?	7
How can all these different possible backplane, cooling, and serial protocols be compatible with each other?	8
What is OPEN VPX?	8
What is an OPEN VPX Pipe?	8
What are OPEN VPX Modules?	8
What is an OPEN VPX plane?	9
Profiles	10
Backplane Profiles	11
Chassis Profile	12
Module Profiles	13
Slot Profile	14
How can I tell if VPX modules and backplane are compatible?	15
Anything else I need to know?	15
Further Reading	15
About Acromag	15



What is VPX?

[VPX \(also known as VITA 46\)](#) is the next generation of ruggedized compact embedded systems. After years of [VME systems](#) dominating the military/aerospace field, users have finally reached the limit of available bandwidth on the VMEbus. VPX expands the possible bandwidth, compared to the traditional VME system, by replacing the parallel bus with high speed serial busses. Much as the desktop market is transitioning from PCI to PCIe, the VME standard has been transformed to embrace the new VPX standards. The serial busses offer higher data rates while using a fraction of routing resources. This allows the new VPX standard to focus more physical backplane resources on improving other design aspects such as supporting larger power draw and more [user I/O](#).

VPX is the general term that references three ANSI/VITA standards.

Standard Name	Description
ANSI/VITA 46.0-2007	VPX Base electrical and mechanical specification
ANSI/VITA 48.0-2010	VPX REDI Cooling specifications.
ANSI/VITA 65.0-2010	OPEN VPX. Organizes the versatile VPX system into a series of industry compatible backplane, module, and chassis profiles.

What do I need to know from VITA 46.0?

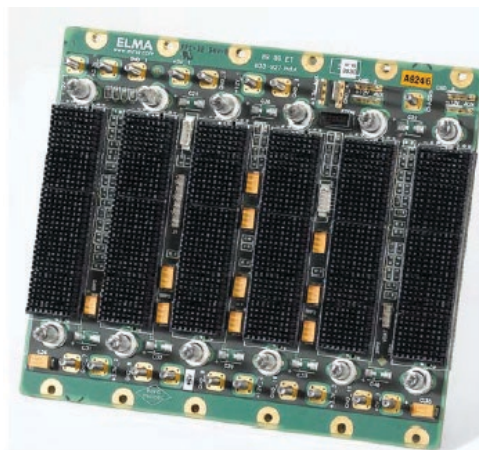
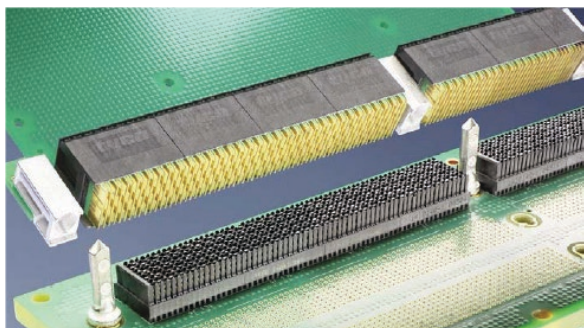
The VITA 46.0-2007 standard specifies the base mechanical and electrical specifications for VPX. Assuming that you have a basic understanding of VME systems, the look and feel of a VPX system is not all that different. VPX maintains the 3U and 6U standard mechanical form factors that currently exist in VME and cPCI systems.



Pictured above (from top counter-clockwise) : [Acromag VPX4810 PMC/XMC carrier card](#) in air-cooled, conduction-cooled, and VPX-REDI formats



The board interconnects are high speed MultiGIG RT connectors from Tyco. These new high speed connectors allow for the use of high speed serial buses upwards of 10 Gbps and beyond.



The actual backplane connection uses either 3 connectors (P0-P2) for a 3U card or 7 connectors (P0-P6) for the 6U card. P0 is reserved for the power and system control signals. P1 has a handful of system control signals and the rest can be used for data bus connections between modules. Any remaining unused pins are considered User I/O and are generally routed to either the Rear Transition Module, as additional flash storage, or backup bus lines. All connectors with the exception of P0 are generally routed in differential pairs. There are single ended schemes listed in the standard, though they are not widely adopted as of late 2010.



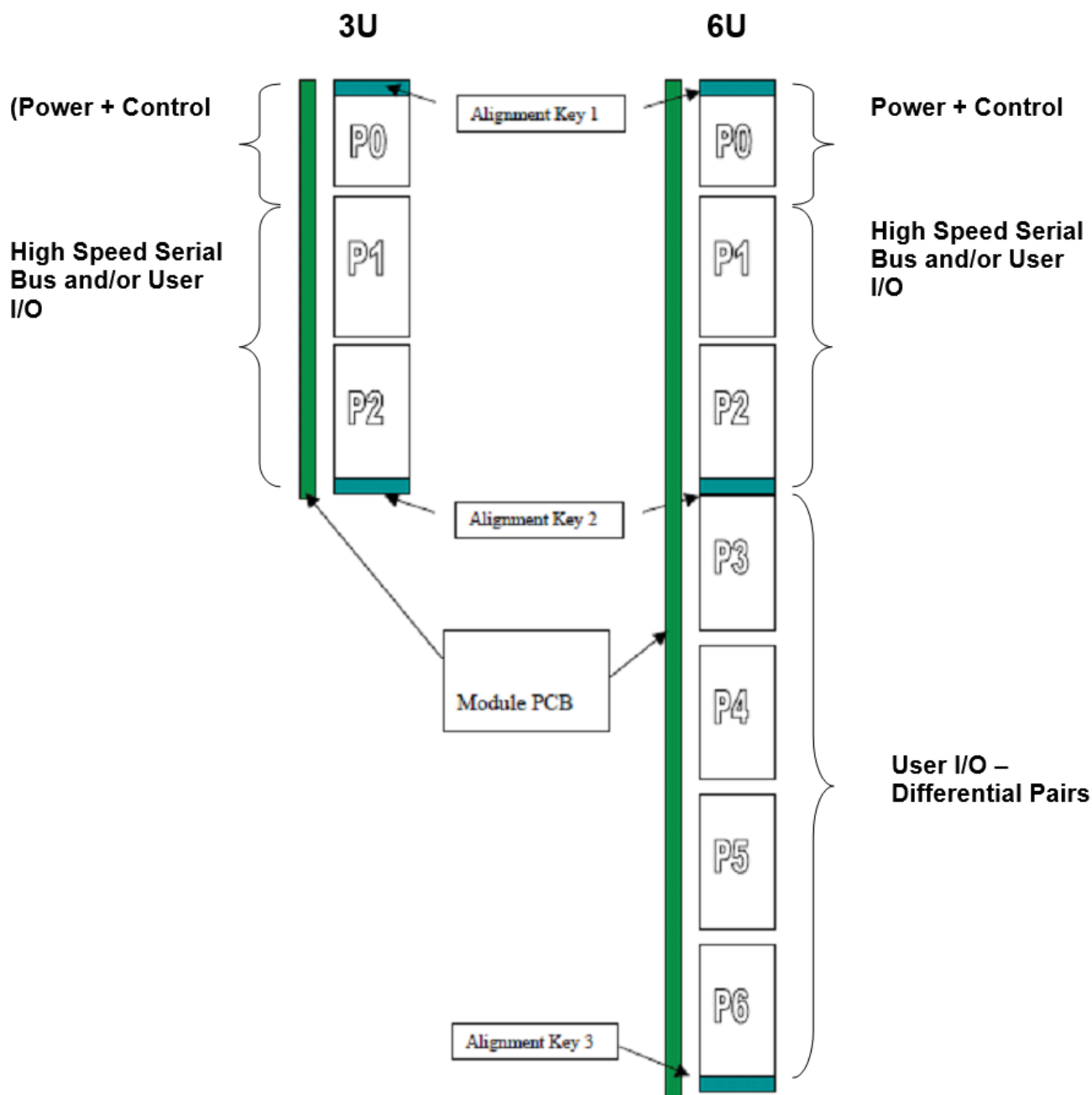


Figure 1. VITA 46.0 VPX board connections.

Power and Control Signals

All power and system control signals are routed through P0 as noted above. The only required control signal is the System Reset (SYSReset). Other connections such as providing a reference clock, JTAG, and the system management Bus must be routed on the backplane but are optional in VPX system implementations.



Power is routed through the backplane to the VPX board via 6 separate signals as noted in the table below. Note that the 3U and 6U backplanes are inherently incompatible due to the voltage differences on VS2.

Power Planes	3U ¹	6U ¹
VS1	+12V	+12.0/48.0V
VS2	+3.3V	Same as VS1. If 48V may be isolated from VS1.
VS3	5V	5V
+3.3V AUX	1 A Max (Optional)	1A Max (Optional)
+12V AUX	1A Max (Optional)	1A Max (Optional)
-12V AUX	1A Max (Optional)	1A Max (Optional)

P1 Connections

P1 contains 32 differential pairs numbered 1-32. These are further divided into transmit (Tx) and receive (Rx) pairs for a total of 16 Tx/Rx groups. Each Tx/Rx grouping is the basis for a high speed serial bus. Note that when present on a module the Tx/Rx groups in P1 are used starting from the lowest numerical assignment to the highest. The VITA 46.0 specification only references high speed serial busses and not any of the protocols that may be supported such as PCIe, RapidIO®, or Gigabit Ethernet. This omission is purposeful. These definitions are left for the VITA 46 dot standards.

What are these VITA 46 “dot” standards I keep hearing about?

The VITA organization has recently begun to differentiate between the minimum required information to implement a specification and the optional features associated with it. Since the VPX standard is designed to work with any high speed serial bus such as Serial RapidIO, PCIe, Gigabit Ethernet, and others, a single standard would be very long and cluttered to enumerate the pin out and electrical specs for the three aforementioned protocols. This is why the “dot” standards were created to simplify organization and to help readers understand the difference between the base requirements every design must have and the optional implantation options. The table below outlines the major dot standards of the VITA 46.0 spec.

Dot Standard	Status ¹	Description
46.1	Approved	VMEbus Signals (Hybrid) on VPX Fabric Connector
46.3	Trial Draft ²	Serial RapidIO on VPX Fabric Connector
46.4	Trial Draft ²	PCI Express on VPX Fabric Connector
46.6	Trial Draft ²	Gigabit Ethernet External Control Plane on VPX
46.7	Trial Draft ²	Ethernet on VPX Fabric Connector
46.9	Draft	PMC/XMC Rear I/O Backplane Routing
46.10	Approved	Rear Transition Modules
46.11	Draft	System Management Signals

1. Status as of 10/15/10.

2. Trial Draft standards are temporary standards that were designed specifically to encourage compatibility among different vendors.

The VITA 46.3, 46.4, and 46.7 give implementation requirements on the three common serial bus interfaces for use on the VPX backplane. Each standard gives pin placement and electrical specifications and are incompatible with each other. Acromag VPX products are compliant to VITA 46.4. They use PCI Express for communication on the backplane.

VITA 46.10-2009 is an approved standard that defines the mechanical specifications for 3U and 6U Rear Transition Modules (RTM). The module is nearly identical to its VMEbus cousin but with a different backplane connector. As with VME, pretty much anything goes in terms of use of the RTM.

VITA 46.11 defines the application use of the system management bus. This standard implements an Intelligent Platform Management Interface (IPMI). This Intel standard loads basic information from the modules prior to booting the operating system and can monitor system health.

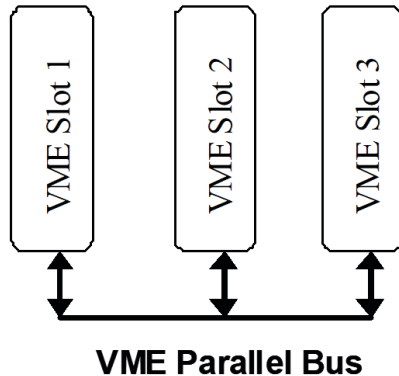


Lastly, VITA 46.9 brings much needed clarification for the routing of PMC and XMC Rear I/O signals to the backplane. Compliance to this specification will allow for some standardization of RTM modules. Note that while there is only one way to route the PMC Rear I/O signals, there are several variations with XMC connectors. Verify that the backplane is VITA 46.9 P2w1-P64s compliant for proper operation with Acromag's VPX products.

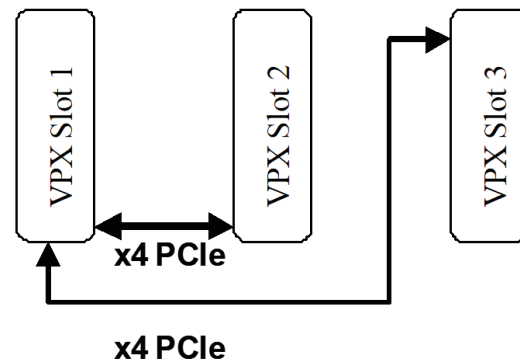
How do the VPX Modules connect on the Backplane?

Unfortunately, the key specification that VITA 46.0 leaves out is how to connect the backplanes together. In VME, there was a parallel bus that connected the processor board to all the remaining plug-in modules. All of the modules shared the same bus. Plug in your SBC into any slot and the system would work.

Simple VME64 System



Simple VPX PCIe System



In a VPX system, there is a serial bus which is point to point. In this case there is no longer a shared bus. Therefore, the backplane MUST route the serial bus from the master to each of the slaves. In the example above, slot 1 of the VPX system routes two, 4-lane PCIe connections to the second and third slots. This works if your SBC provides 8 lanes of PCIe and is plugged into slot 1. However, plug-in the same SBC into VPX Slot 3 and now VPX slot 2 is unconnected. While this is easy to understand in the simple example above, it becomes more complicated with larger backplanes. How many signals should the backplane route to each module in a 5 slot backplane? Consider the fact they many processor boards may not have enough resources to supply every slot with a bus connection. It gets even worse if you consider that whatever the backplane routing, both your processor board and any plug-in modules would have to match to the backplane for everything to function.

What is VPX REDI?

VPX REDI is defined within VITA 48 and standards for "Ruggedized Enhanced Design Implementation". This standard applies specifically for VPX systems (VITA 46.0 and 65.0) and defines the mechanical interface between the chassis and the plug-in modules. It expands upon the plug-in module pitch from the 0.8" standard defined in VITA 46.0 and adds both 0.85" and 1.0" pitches. The increased size allowance permits the addition of top and bottom side covers to facilitate ESD protection, conduction cooling, and level 2 maintenance. Level two maintenance refers to military grade products that this field replaceable. This adds additional Electrical Static Discharge (ESD) requirements, includes a full metal jacket around all exposed electrical components. The mechanical plates also simplify conduction cooled chassis design by maintaining consistency across all modules. The mechanical specifications for the various types of cooling that are available in the VITA 48 dot specs is noted in the table below.

Dot Standard	Status ¹	Description
48.1-2010	Approved	REDI Air Cooling applied to VITA 46
48.2-2010	Approved	REDI Conduction Cooling applied to VITA 46
48.3	Draft	REDI Liquid Cooling Applied to VITA 46
48.5	Draft	Air cooled module electronic placement requirements applied to VITA 46.

1. As of 10/15/10.

To simplify matters, between the various pitch boards and cooling methods available in VPX systems, Acromag has standardized to the following three VPX board cooling types. Note that this is subject to change based upon approval of additional draft standards and/or market conditions.



Cooling Method	Pitch	Description
Air	0.80"	Standard VITA 46 compliant board. Supports Front I/O. Fits in all VPX chassis.
Conduction Cooled	0.85"	Top Conduction Cooling plate added to VITA 46. Only supports Rear I/O. Fits in most chassis.
Conduction Cooled-REDI	1.00"	REDI Conduction Cooled with level 2 maintenance support. This type of module has cover plates on both sides with no exposed components for ESD protection. Rear I/O only. Fits only in VITA 48.2 compliant chassis.

How can all these different possible backplane, cooling, and serial protocols be compatible with each other?

After pondering this question most companies came to the conclusion that all VPX products would require some type of custom backplane depending upon the desired plug-in modules. In other words, the system designer would select the modules and then create a custom backplane that would work for them. This defeats the purpose of having a standard in the first place. After much discussion and debate, VITA 65.0 "OPEN VPX" was written to reign in VITA 46's and VITA 48's seemingly limitless configurations.

What is OPEN VPX?

Open VPX was the industry's attempt to bring order to chaos. Open VPX methodically defines a system of profiles that would fully explain the interactions between the backplane and plug-in modules. The profiles are the physical mapping of resources in the system. This information can then be used to determine compatibility.

Before diving into the actual profiles, first we need to introduce some new terminology unique to OPEN VPX.

What is an OPEN VPX Pipe?

Definition

Pipe: A term used to characterize the total number of differential pairs (Rx and Tx) accessible, regardless of protocol.

The pipe is used to standardize differential pair groups, regardless of protocol. There is also specific terminology in determining the width of the pipe. See the table below. Note the abbreviations in parenthesis next to the name. These will be used later.

Name	Differential Pairs	Example
Ultra-Thin Pipe (U)	2	x1 PCIe, 1x Serial RapidIO®
Thin Pipe (T)	4	x2 PCIe, 1000BASE-T
Fat Pipe (F)	8	x4 PCIe, 4x Serial RapidIO®, 10GBASE-KX4
Double Fat Pipe (D)	16	x8 PCIe

Pipes are easier to understand if you have a basic understanding of the serial bus protocols. While that discussion is beyond the scope of this document, note that a single lane of PCI Express is comprised of 2 differential pairs. One pair is dedicated to transmission (Tx), and the other to receiving (Rx), creating a full duplex connection. In turn, this lane is represented by an Ultra-Thin Pipe (a single pipe) within VPX. A module that supports two 4 lane PCI Express ports is represented by two Fat Pipes. However, the Pipe itself does not represent a protocol. Those same two Fat Pipes could also use the Serial RapidIO® protocol. This term allows us to specify backplane capabilities, regardless of the intermediate protocol used. Acromag's [VPX4810](#) products support two Fat Pipes.

What are OPEN VPX Modules?

Definition

Module: A board that conforms to defined mechanical and electrical specifications such as 3U and 6U plug-in modules.

At first glance, a module definition appears straightforward. VITA 65.0 takes it one step further and defines multiple module types depending on functionality. These types of modules are self explanatory and are provided below for reference. Note the abbreviations in parenthesis next to the name. These will be used later.



Name	Description
Payload Module (PAY)	The module that provides hardware processing for the top level application. (i.e. a Single Board Computer, or SBC)
Peripheral Module (PER)	An I/O module that requires a payload module to function.
Storage Module (STO)	Provides the functionality of a disk drive
Switch Module (SWH)	Provides for the switch fabric to transfer data from at least one upstream port to multiple downstream ports. (i.e. a hub)
Bridge Module	A switch module that changes bus protocols. For example switching from PCIe to 1000BASE-T.

The [Acromag VPX product line](#) is composed of Peripheral modules.

What is an OPEN VPX plane?

To simplify connectivity descriptions in the OPEN VPX profiles, the standard separates all signals into 6 unique groups, called planes, as noted in the table below. Note that planes never interconnect and are only used to clarify the purpose of the available connections on the backplane.

Name	Description
Control Plane	GB Ethernet Bus controller (optional, either internal or external).
Data Plane	An I/O module that requires a payload module to function.
Expansion Plane	For I/O or data movement within the chassis. Miscellaneous plane.
Management Plane	VITA 46.11 Chassis (System) level management.
Utility Plane	Power, Slot level management, and identification.
User I/O	Everything that's left. Typically used for RTM.

The *Data plane* is the most important, since those are the high speed bus connections on P1 that are used to connect modules together on the backplane. The Data Plane protocol must match for all modules in a system to have interoperability.

The *Control plane* is defined by VITA 46.6 and is not required for VPX system operation. These are Gigabyte Ethernet signals that are used to connect two separate VPX systems (i.e. backplanes) together. These signals are often routed from a SBC to a RTM for external connection.

The *Utility Plane* contains all of the power, slot level management, and system identification as required in VITA 46.0.

The *Management plane*, defined in VITA 46.11, is only four signals and is not required for VPX system operation. This plane is intended to implement the Intelligent Platform Management Interface (IPMI).

User I/O is the term given to any backplane connections that are not part of any of the above planes. There are no fixed requirements for these I/O.



Profiles

VITA 65.0 completely characterizes a VPX system within the scope of 4 types of profiles; Backplane, chassis, module and slot. A brief description of each is given in the table below.

Definition

Profile: *A description of the physical resource mapping within the system.*

Name	Description
Backplane Profile	Describes number of slots, protocols supported, and the topology for connecting the slots.
Chassis Profile	Provides information on the number of slots, power supply, and cooling methodology.
Module Profile	Contains information on the type, size, connections, and protocols for each plug-in module.
Slot Profile	Gives specific information on how the backplane pins are connected for each individual slot.

Each system will have one chassis and backplane profile. There will be a slot profile for each slot on the backplane. There is one module profile for each plug-in module in the system. The information provided on profiles is for reference to help gain a basic understanding of VPX systems.

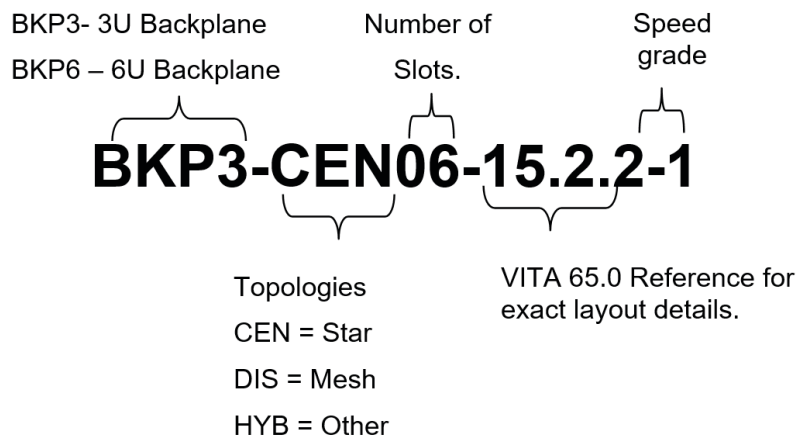


Backplane Profiles

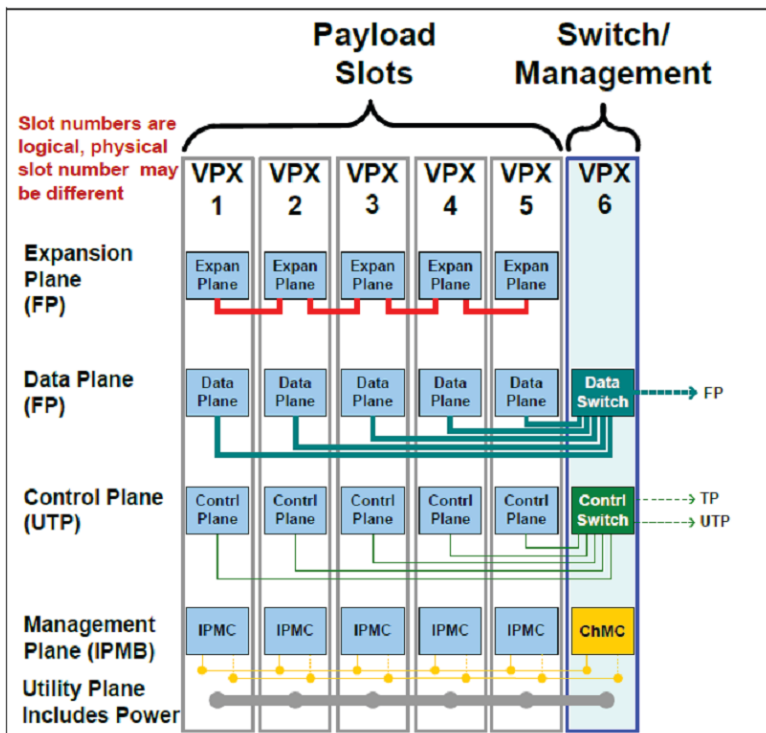
As previously noted, the biggest problem with VITA 46 was the lack of any guidance with the backplane routing. To clarify and to standardize the problem, Open VPX provides 14 standard backplane configurations.

Specifically, the backplane profile describes the number of slots, the standards supported, and the topology for connecting the boards (either star or mesh).

An example of a backplane profile from VITA 65 is BKP3-CEN06-15.2.2-1. The breakdown of each item in the name is below.



For further information on the backplane profile you need to reference the VITA 65 specification referenced in the name. In this case, turning to VITA 65 section 15.2.2.n gives us the following graphical representation as well as other information such as compatible slot and module profiles.



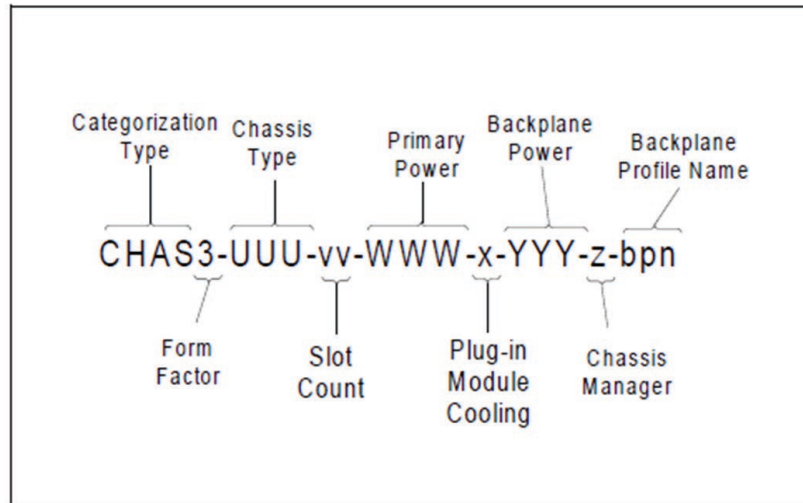
BKP3-CEN06-15.2.2.n is one example of a backplane that is compatible with [Acromag's VPX product line](#).

Figure 15.2.2-1 Topology of BKP3-CEN06-15.2.2-n



Chassis Profile

The chassis profile describes the number of slots, power provided, and the cooling method as outlined in the example below.



Form-factor = 3U or 6U

UUU Standard Development Chassis Type {RCK | TOW | OPN}

Where RCK = 19" EIA Rack Mount

TOW = Stand-alone Tower

OPN = Open Frame

WWW Primary Power {3PA | 3PB | 1PA | 1PB}

3PA = 3 Phase, 208VAC, 50/60 Hz

3PB = 3 Phase, 400VAC 50/60 Hz

1PA = Single phase, 110/220VAC, 50/60 Hz

1PB = Single phase, 230VAC, 50/60 Hz

x Plug-in Module Cooling Type {A | C}

A = VITA 48.1 air cooled

C = VITA 48.2 conduction cooled

YYY Backplane Power Option {12H | 5VH | VEN}

12H = 12V centric power

5VH = 5V centric power

VEN = Supplier Defined

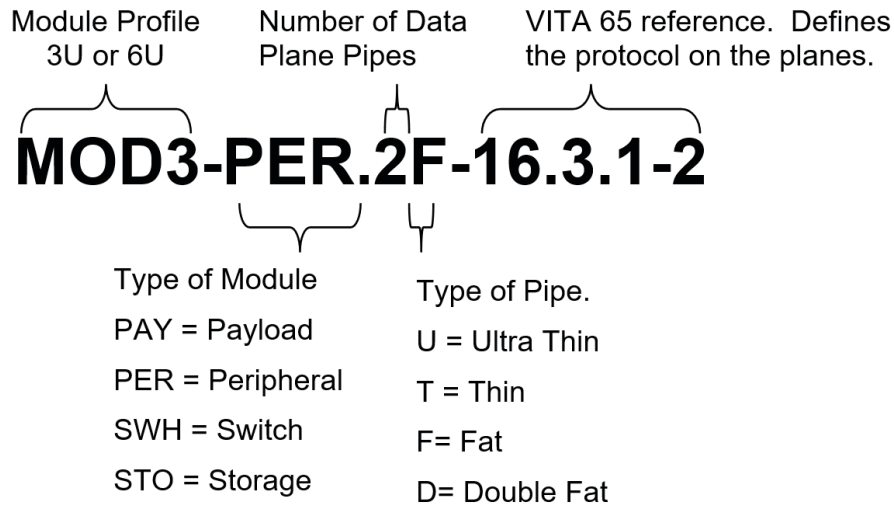
z Chassis Manager {N | Y} – Yes or no

Backplane Profile Name: Backplane profile discussed in previous section if installed.



Module Profiles

The module profile contains information on the type and size of plug-in modules, the pipes available for use and the protocol associated with those pipes. An example module profile is given below.

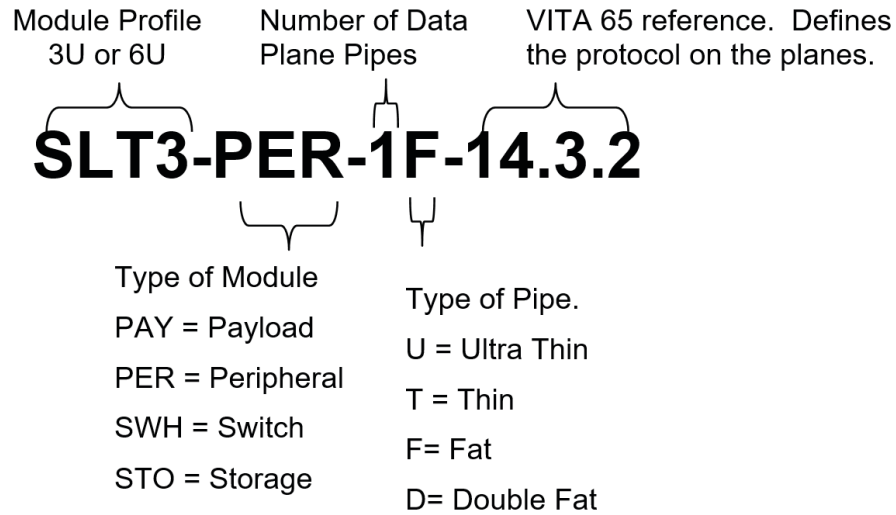


Note that if there are pipes available on the expansion plane a number and letter would immediately follow the 2F. For example a module with 2 fat pipes on the data plane and four thin pipes on the expansion pane would be 2F4T. If there were pipes on the control plane then a number and letter would follow the expansion plane reference. Refer to the VITA 65 specification for further details on this, and on the specific protocols referenced.



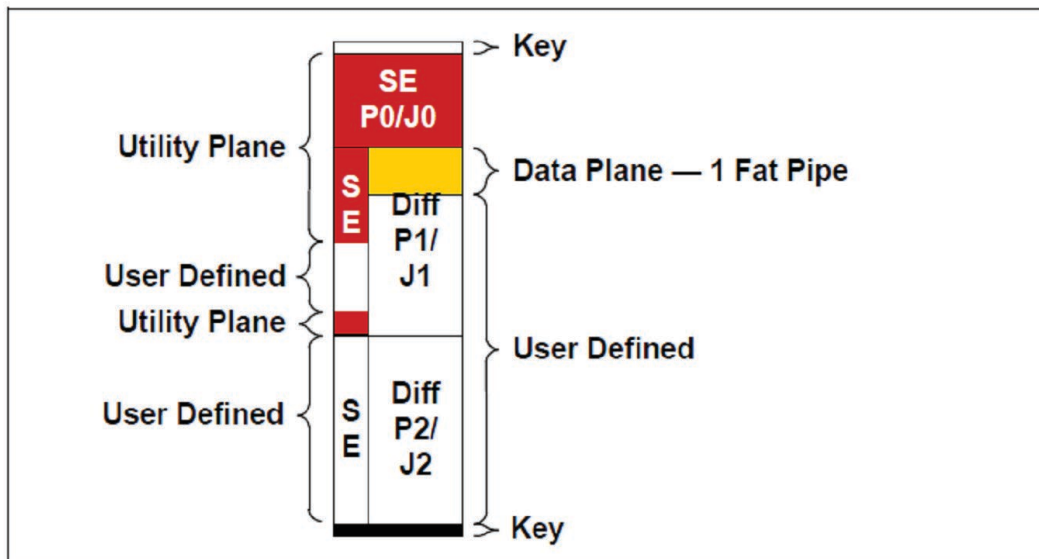
Slot Profile

The slot profile contains information on how the backplane pins are connected for each slot. An example slot profile is SLT3-PER-1F-14.3.2 and is broken down into its component parts below.



Once again, if there were pipes available on the Expansion plane a number and letter would immediately follow the 1F. For example, a module with 1 fat pipe on the data plane and four thin pipes on the expansion plane would be 1F4T. If there were pipes on the control plane then a number and letter would follow the expansion plane reference. Refer to the VITA 65 specification for further details.

As with backplane profiles, VITA 65 provides a graphical representation for all slot profiles. The graphical representation of the SLT3-PER-1F-14.3.2 example is below.





How can I tell if VPX modules and backplane are compatible?

This is perhaps the first and most important question when building a VPX system, and yet with the propagation of backplane, module, and slots profiles it is one of the most difficult to answer. There are multiple compatible module profiles for each slot, and multiple compatible slot profiles for each space on the backplane and, therefore, no simple one size fits all profile check is adequate. Acromag tries to simplify that answer for you in our [White Paper Will Acromag's VPX4810 work in my System?](#) This information is available from either your local sales representative or on our website at www.acromag.com.

Anything else I need to know?

There are plenty of other VITA standards in the works that you should monitor which may have an effect on future VPX systems. Specifically, there is work to add a new connector for both XMC and VPX so that they can support the next generation of high speed serial buses such as PCIe 3.0. While the goal of these connectors is to be pin compatible with their predecessors, they are not mechanically compatible. See the table below for a brief description of these and other draft standards.

Vita STD ¹	Description
VITA 62 – Draft	Standardize power supply size/connectors.
VITA 68 – Draft	Define Electrical specifications and characteristics for VPX backplanes.
VITA 66 – Draft ²	Fiber Optics on VPX Fabric Connector
VITA 67 – Draft ²	Analog/RF on VPX Fabric Connector
VITA 60 – Draft	Alternative VPX connector (next gen buses)
VITA 61 – Draft	Alternative XMC connector (next gen buses)

1. As of 10/15/10.
2. Removed from VITA 46 dot standards due to incompatibility with backplane.

As a final note if you read the VITA specifications on VPX the pins of the backplane connectors are referred to as wafers. They are called wafers since the connector does not employ metal pins in the traditional sense but rather small printed circuit boards with gold fingers.

Further Reading

All of the VITA specifications noted in this document are available at www.vita.com.

Acromag White Paper: [Will Acromag's VPX4810 work in my System?](#)

Acromag User's Manual: [VPX4810 VPX XMC/PMC Carrier](#)

Additional Acromag documents are available on our web site www.acromag.com.

About Acromag

[Acromag](#) is a multi-million-dollar international corporation that combines more than [60 years of process monitoring and control experience](#) with a solid background in high-tech computer design.

We are focused on developing industrial I/O solutions that provide the best long-term value in the industry. A complete line of industrial I/O products including process instruments, signal conditioning equipment, data acquisition boards, distributed I/O modules, and network communication devices are available. Industries served include manufacturing, water services, power generation, mining, defense, and transportation.

Acromag I/O is ideal for a broad range of monitoring and control operations where controllers communicate with instrumentation on the plant floor or in the field.