

Topic(s):
CAD &
The Internet

Investigation of how CAD/CAM using companies are using the Internet

In the last issue of *iCAD* we looked at the percentage of CAD/CAM using companies using the Internet for any purpose, and the proportion of companies that have Internet access at their CAD seats. In this issue we look more closely at how companies are actually using the Internet and email. We interviewed 250 UK CAD/CAM using companies in January 2001 from a cross section of industry sectors. Unless specified, the responses relate to the broad spectrum of business activity and not just to the design process.

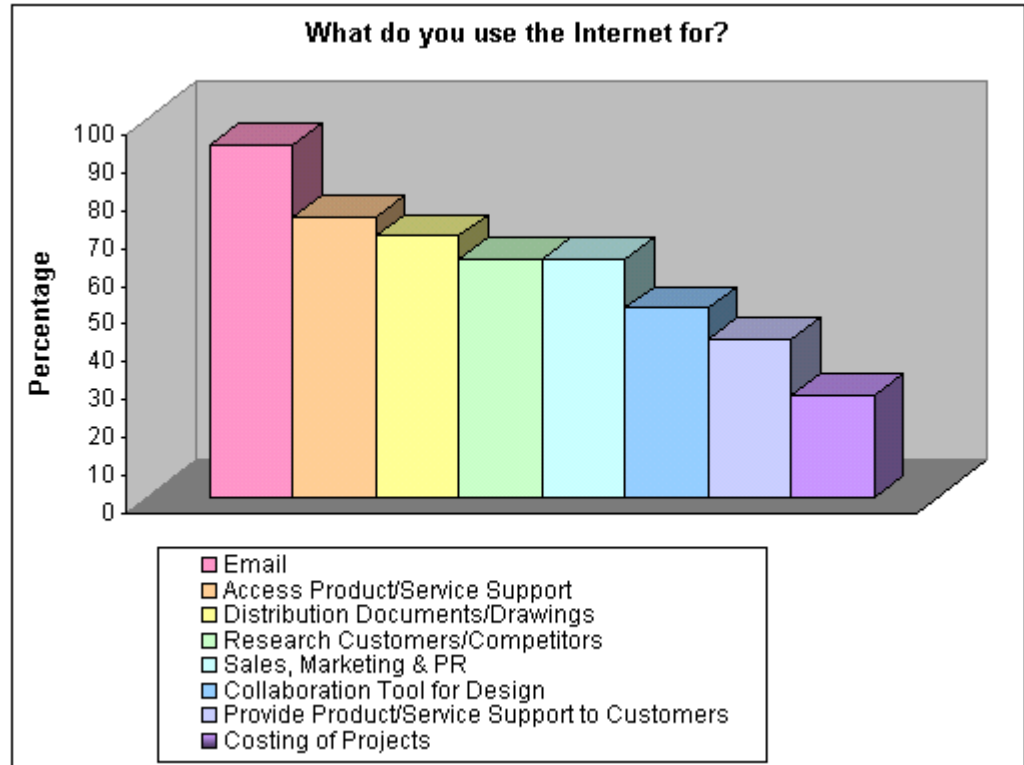
In the [last issue](#) of *iCAD* we revealed that:

- 96% of CAD/CAM using companies have Internet access
- a third of these have Internet access at all their CAD/CAM desks
- a third have Internet access at some of their CAD/CAM desks
- a third have no Internet access at their CAD/CAM desks

iCAD is produced by Business Advantage, a B2B research, business development and marketing consulting practice operating in the global IT, Digital and Telecommunication sectors.

What is the Internet being used for?

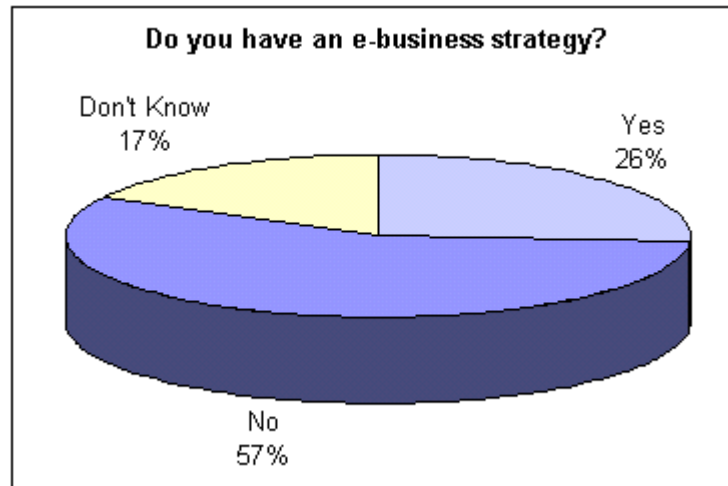
The chart below shows the proportion of CAD/CAM using companies using the Internet for various activities. Surprisingly, there are still 7% of businesses without e-mail. Just over a quarter said they use the Internet for costing projects (i.e. checking suppliers' websites, using e-catalogues etc). Three quarters said they use it to access product or service support. Most interestingly, **50% of our sample said that they use the Internet as a collaboration tool in the design process**. We will conduct a more in-depth survey to explore the type of collaborative activity that this group is involved with. It is likely however, that the majority of these respondents are actually referring to a range of activities that can be categorised more as methods to improve communication, such as video conferencing, sending viewable data as email attachments and placing information on websites for suppliers/customers. The proportion engaged in real time interactive work with shared data, or the wider collaborative solutions for managing a product's lifecycle, will be much smaller.



Do you have an e-business strategy?

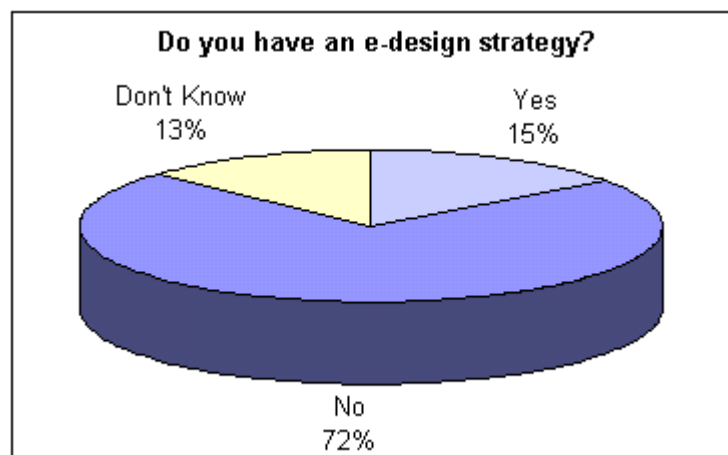
Only a quarter of our sample definitely have an overall e-business strategy. Over a half said they do not, and 17% were non-committal on whether their e-planning constitutes a strategy or not (categorised as 'don't know' in the chart below).

Not surprisingly, the larger the company, the more likely they are to have an e-business strategy. A third of companies with over 100 staff said they do have one, while the percentage falls to 13% for companies with less than 25 staff.



Do you have an e-design strategy?

How far does e-strategic planning extend to the design process? **Only 15% of companies said that they definitely have a strategy to develop Internet use to enhance the design process.** Almost three quarters of companies said they do not, and the remaining 15% were in the 'well, sort of' category. Again, no surprise that size of company has a strong bearing on this issue; over one in five companies with more than 100 staff have an e-design strategy, compared to one in fifty companies with less than 25 staff.



Conclusion

We know that the ever-increasing pressure on businesses to deliver products more quickly creates an environment that calls for greater collaboration between them, their suppliers and customers. We have noted above that the majority of those in our sample who said they were using the Internet as a collaborative tool will be referring to a broad spectrum of activity covering the simpler forms of information sharing. However, it is interesting that 50% of companies said that Internet technologies play a role in their design processes. There is a possible hint of a grey area between what users view as collaborative activity, compared to the vendors' view of this area. It will be interesting to look in future issues of *iCAD* at the levels of awareness of the new collaborative tools becoming available, in addition to the actual types of activity that users view as falling under the collaboration banner.

Only around 15% of companies have a strategy to develop the web-based elements of their design strategy. This is not surprising given the relative newness of the whole Internet collaboration phenomenon and the pace at which the related technologies are developing. Certain activities now widely conducted via the Internet (e.g. marketing, accessing product and service support) can develop independently within an organisation. *iCAD* will monitor the pace at which organisations are taking the next step and adopting a more holistic approach to using the Internet to join up, enhance and manage functions across the extended enterprise.

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