

**Topic:**  
MCAD

## Our Supplier is an Animal

We asked managers of CAD/CAM functions at mechanical engineering sites to consider the attributes of their main CAD/CAM supplier - and then name the animal that springs to mind. The findings are, well, wild.....

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



All successful businesses must have a bit of the beast inside them. If we asked CAD Spaghetti readers to compare their companies to a particular animal, the big cat family would probably feature prominently. But don't get carried away - that image of your business as the fast, perfectly adapted cheetah may not be one shared by your customers. We recently asked managers of CAD/CAM related functions at 243 sites in the mechanical engineering sector to think about their main CAD/CAM supplier.....and then name the animal that springs to mind. Half of our sample had a go at this, and their responses take us through every corner of the animal kingdom and beyond. **It is our duty to warn CAD managers that there are suppliers with the attributes of insects, reptiles and aliens plying their trade in this market.** Read on.....

### The Speed Merchants

For one in five of our sample, speed is the defining factor of their CAD/CAM supplier. Those suppliers identified as panthers by 11% of CAD managers can feel pleased with themselves, but there was the odd sting in the tail: *"The response time is good – but I get the feel of danger when the salesman turns up."* The remaining speed merchants were visualized as leopards, hares, eagles, horses and road-runners.

**Pick of the bunch:**  
*"Panther – because they they're so damn efficient and quick. They give quotes within the hour, and deliver the next day."*

### Tricky Traders

So a customer likens you to a fox, and you think "great, I'm clever and adaptable!"

Think again. Eleven percent of our sample imagined their supplier in a bushy tail and whiskers, but it was the fox's sly, cunning reputation they had in mind. *"They always know more than the purchaser and take advantage of this,"* and, *"Sly - say one thing, mean another"* were typical comments. Overall 21% named animals with sly/slithery/devious reputations. There were four snakes (*"poisonous, slippery, and when it comes to money there's always a sting in the tail"* - ouch!), a hyena, a wolf, a tiger, a monkey, and a weasel (*"because he worms his way in and is a perfect pest"*).



### Handle With Care

For some CAD managers, there's danger in the air when their supplier pulls up in the car-park. Pain and sharp teeth were referred to by 5% of our sample, who have to deal with terriers (*"once they've got hold of you they don't let go"*), sharks (*"very aggressive"*), bees and tigers.

#### Do they mean foxes?!

***"Fox - they are terrible people; money grabbers who rip you off and get you cornered."***

***"Fox - because they are sly money grabbers who take advantage of engineers and drive them out of business."***

### Lean On Me

Dogs - faithful, reliable, always there for you; 5% of our sample see their supplier in this light. *"Supportive and helpful,"* said one; *"ever faithful,"* said another; *"lies at my feet"*, said a third, possibly getting confused with his pet. Other entries to this solid, supportive category were a cat (*"because it protects you all the time"* - eh?), an elephant, and a horse (*"they're very stable, errrr, and that's where a horse lives"*).

#### No pain, no gain:

***"Tiger - they will bite you if you don't watch out."***

***"Bee - attractive, but stings."***

### The Sages

We return to more wholesome images; 11% picked out the wisdom and intelligence of their suppliers, and nominated them as owls. A dolphin and a chameleon ("*suits many environments*") make up this intelligent set.

**Hooting words of wisdom:**  
***"Owl - they know everything we want to find out about; very helpful and knowledgeable."***

### Best Mates

What better way to endear yourself to a customer than by looking good, and being a warm, fun-loving kinda' guy/gal? Four percent of managers see their suppliers as animals with these traits, including a cat, a hyena ("*because they are a good laugh*"), a rabbit, a lynx ("*cool - very nice guy*") and a panda.

**A comforting experience:**  
***"Panda - because they're big and cuddly and look good."***



### Dawdling Dealers

If you're labeled as a tortoise, no further explanation should be necessary; 4% of our sample think their suppliers require a strategically placed rocket to move things along. "*Painfully slow - nothing gets anywhere*" - you get the drift. There were also two dinosaurs ("*they are so ancient*"), two snails, a sloth, a water-buffalo and a monkey ("*keeps you hanging around*").

### The Vanishing Acts

May I compare thee to an extinct, flightless bird? Four percent of our managers named animals noticeable for their absence. These included a dodo, an ostrich ("*always hide their head*"), a mole, a vulture ("*they take your money and leave you high and dry*"), a phantom ("*you never see or hear of them*") - and possibly the most insulting of all the comparisons made in our survey - a cockroach.

**The hands-off approach**  
***"Dodo - spoke to them so long ago I don't think they exist anymore."***  
***"Cockroach - they hide in the corner in the dark and never give you any information."***

## World Of The Strange

Some of the animals visualised by our CAD managers defy categorisation. There were some 'off the wall' notions of animal behaviour; "Our supplier is like an owl, because his prices are very reasonable," and, "Ours is a panda - always busy or on the phone." The choice of some animals says more about the state of mind of the CAD manager rather than supplier; "My supplier is an aardvark, because I like them." Other animals crammed into this miscellaneous group include a caterpillar ("they are just so fickle"), an alien ("some of their ideas are out of this world"), an elephant, and the entire male species.

## Conclusion

Two things struck us as we conducted this survey. Firstly, that a large proportion of managers of CAD/CAM related functions have very vivid imaginations (even if for some, the challenge of identifying a single animal was too much; "If you can think of an animal that talks a lot of waffle, and then makes things more complicated than necessary, then stick it's name down!").

Secondly, there was a high proportion of our managers prepared to make less than favourable comparisons for their main CAD/CAM supplier; 42% visualised negative characteristics in animal form. Our previous studies of attitudes to CAD/CAM suppliers have shown very positive results, with very few CAD managers considering switching to a new one. Perhaps there is a significant proportion with a wicked sense of humour to add to the vivid imagination.

**We are not expecting a flood of requests from suppliers wanting to find out what animals their customers see them as. However, if you do want a better understanding of the image and awareness of your company and its products/services, Business Advantage's multi-lingual market research team can provide [the solution](#). Alternatively, contact us to discuss how best to meet your other market intelligence needs for domestic or international markets on +44 (0)1689 873636, or e-mail us at [info@business-advantage.com](mailto:info@business-advantage.com).**

**Alternative views:**  
**"Our suppliers are just typical men - They do whatever you want them to, but in their own way. You have a certain amount of control over them, but they have a mind of their own."**

**"Elephant - because they are always trying to get money out of you with their long trunks, like elephants nicking your peanuts at the zoo - always trying to get you to buy things you don't want."**