

Topic:
PLM

PLM – Anyone Listening?

How far has the term PLM sunk into the consciousness of managers of CAD/CAM related functions at mechanical engineering sites?

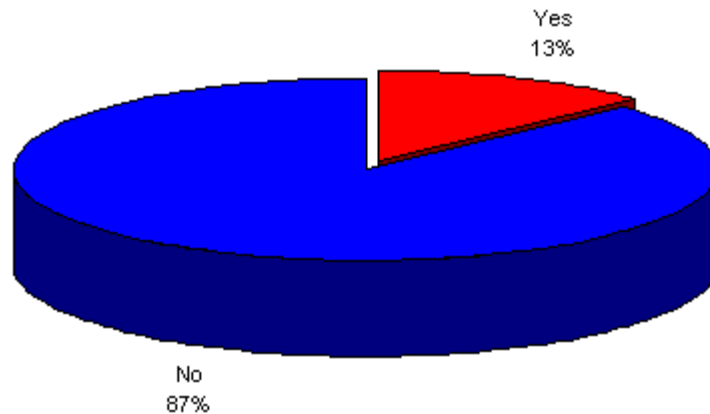
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PLM - hard to escape from, yet difficult to get to grips with. Vendors and analysts are talking it up in every possible forum, but what impact is the marketing barrage having? We asked a sample of managers of design functions at 252 mechanical engineering companies a few basic questions about PLM to gauge their awareness.

PL What?

Only 13% of the 252 managers said they had heard of the term PLM - hard to believe for those of us who spend too long wallowing in the CAD/CAE/PDM etc. related media, but these guys clearly have better things to do with their time.

Have You Heard Of The Term 'PLM'?



Our sample is made up of a broad cross-section of companies, including small businesses that are not the natural targets of the PLM vendors. When we analysed the sample by site size, we found that 23% of managers at sites with more than 1,000 staff were familiar with the term, compared to 12% of managers at sites with less than 1,000 staff. However we were still expecting more managers overall to have come across the term, even if the meaning eluded them. Perhaps further additions to the growing list of three letter abbreviations simply fail to register anymore.

A Little Knowledge....

Only 31 managers (i.e. the 13% aware of the term PLM) therefore won the right to answer our second question: 'what does the abbreviation PLM stand for?' **Only 12 said "Product Lifecycle Management" (5% of the overall sample)**. Seventeen didn't know or couldn't remember, and one gave an answer with no connection to products or lifecycles.

Concept Awareness

Is it the abbreviation *and* concept of PLM that managers of design functions are unfamiliar with? Straightforward definitions of PLM are hard to come across; our interviewers gave the following very basic outline of the PLM concept to the whole sample: *"PLM offers a solution for managing and sharing information from every phase in a product's lifecycle, making the best use of all the data and knowledge gathered from concept through to manufacturing and beyond."* **Forty percent of our sample said they were aware that solutions of this nature were available**. Clearly there is some way to go before the PLM tag is more widely associated with this type of enterprise-wide solution.

PLM In Action

Four per cent of our sample said they had implemented a PLM solution. This figure seems to be artificially inflated, however, through misunderstandings about the nature of PLM; some of this group of 10 individuals went on to talk solely about other individual solutions such as EDM, PDM and visualisation software.

As so many of our sample are unfamiliar with the concept of PLM, questions on future intentions towards its use are unlikely to give very reliable indications on the potential take-up of this technology. For the record however, **7% of managers said their companies were planning to implement a PLM solution in future**.

Vendor Awareness

Seven per cent of our sample said they could name a major developer of PLM technology; only 3% however went on to correctly name such a developer (IBM topped the frequency charts with three mentions).

Conclusion

We aren't reporting these findings in a '*shock/horror, no one's heard of PLM!*' sense. It's a term that has only recently started to be widely publicised, and only a small proportion of our sample is the type of large corporation that these solutions are currently being targeted at. That said, we were expecting higher levels of awareness of the term's existence given the degree of coverage it has had recently. Two out of five managers we interviewed however seemed to be aware of the broad concept behind PLM - far more important than knowledge of the abbreviation itself. In summary:

- Developers and suppliers of PLM technology cannot assume that potential customers recognise this term. Only 5% of our sample could correctly identify what this abbreviation stands for.
- Although 40% of our sample said they are familiar with the broad concept of PLM, only 3% could name a PLM solution developer. There could be an opportunity for better recognition for suppliers who can cut through the waffle and offer some straight talking about what the concept means and who it is relevant to.

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