

Topic:
MCAD & 2D/3D

Solid Modelling, Slow Progress

The growth in the proportion of mechanical engineering sites using 3D seems to have stalled

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

In March 2001 *iCAD* reported on the use of and attitudes to 3D CAD across all CAD using business activities ('[CAD/CAM User Attitudes To The 3D Experience](#)'). After a year in which 3D CAD suppliers have continued to bang home messages about productivity gains, can we see any increase in the proportion of 3D users, or of those planning to adopt it? To assess the picture in the **mechanical engineering sector**, we interviewed managers of design/product development functions at 262 UK sites in January 2002 (selected as a representative sample of the mechanical engineering sector).

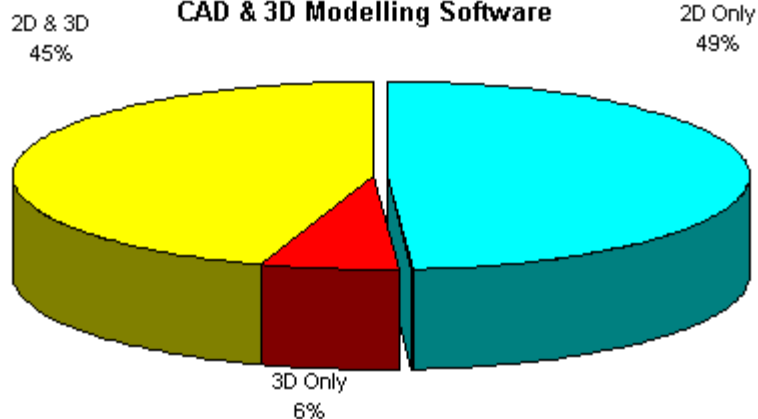
In March 2001 iCAD reported that:

- 47% of the sites in the overall CAD/CAM user market were using 3D CAD to varying degrees
- **50% of mechanical engineering sites were using 3D**
- 17% of the 2D using sites in the overall CAD/CAM user market were planning to move to 3D in future
- **18% of 2D using mechanical engineering sites were planning to move to 3D.**

No Change

Our survey picks up no change in the proportion of sites now using 3D from this time last year; 45% are using both 2D and 3D packages, and 6% use 3D only. **This still leaves 49% of sites that are using 2D drafting tools only.**

Mechanical Engineering Sector - Proportions of sites using 2D CAD & 3D Modelling Software



The Size Factor

As expected, the smaller the site, the less likely they are to be using 3D. **Just 30% of sites with less than 100 staff are using 3D, compared to 65% of sites with more than 100 staff.**

Productive Views

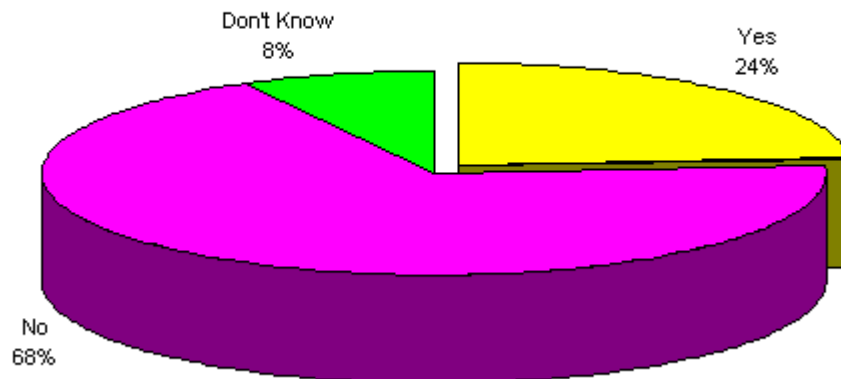
Do users of 3D solutions feel the productivity gains promised by vendors have been realised? **Three out of five of this group said that the adoption of solid modelling had increased productivity**, a quarter said it hadn't, and 16% weren't sure. The length of time that individuals have been using 3D is clearly a factor here; some sites may have been expecting too much too soon, especially where suppliers have underplayed the difficulty of mastering solid modelling.

The number of sites who said that use of 3D had increased productivity was too small (75 sites) for further statistically accurate analysis; however 31% of these feel that productivity has increased more than expected, 57% feel the gains have been the same as expected, and only 8% said they were less than expected.

Solid Plans

Nearly a quarter of those not currently using 3D are planning to do so in future. This is a significant increase on our findings last year, when 18% of mechanical engineering sites expressed this intention. However, 68% of sites said they have no plans to adopt 3D.

Do 2D Users Plan To Move To 3D In Future?



Reasons Against

We asked the group of sites with no plans to move to 3D for the reasons behind their decision (no promptings were offered). **Half them stated that 3D was just not relevant to their business, and about a third mentioned that 2D was adequate for their needs.**

Conclusion

Many vendors will admit that the rate of uptake of 3D solutions is continuing to frustrate them; however the fact that we can pick up no measurable increase in the proportion of sites using solid modelling is disappointing by anyone's standards.

We've commented before in *iCAD* that the outcome of asking a group of people why they will not adopt a particular technology should be treated with caution, as factors such as fear of change or ignorance of particular applications are hard to pick up in a simple survey such as this. However, it's likely that for a sizeable proportion of the large groups who feel 3D is irrelevant to them, or that 2D is adequate for their needs, marketing messages about increased productivity go right over their heads. They simply don't think that 3D applies to their particular needs. For suppliers targeting this group, any assumptions that the case for 3D is unassailable must be put to one side.

There's encouragement to be found in the fact that a quarter of 2D users are planning to adopt 3D in future. Converting these intentions to hard sales is another matter of course, but there is enough interest for marketing and sales teams to get their teeth into.

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