

SOLIDWORKS World 2016: New Directions

CIMdata Commentary

Key takeaways:

- *SOLIDWORKS announced Xdesign, a new cloud-based CAD product, and Xdrive, a cloud-based storage solution to be delivered in the future*
- *Bernard Charlès, Dassault Systèmes' CEO promised a major company push to be #1 in the architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) market*
- *SOLIDWORKS and Altium announced a new SOLIDWORKS/PCB application with integration to SOLIDWORKS that provides much needed functionality for developing smart, connected products*

Dassault Systèmes recently staged their 18th annual user conference, SOLIDWORKS World 2016, in Dallas, Texas. Over 5,000 users, value-added resellers, solution partners, press, industry analysts, and SOLIDWORKS employees attended the January 31 through February 3, 2016 event. The SOLIDWORKS World Web site live streamed the event's general sessions. Mr. Gian Paolo Bassi, CEO SOLIDWORKS, opened the first day's general session welcoming the attendees under the familiar marketing banner of "Make Great Design Happen." Mr. Bassi defined product innovation as creativity plus execution, while noting that innovation is an ecosystem that requires a powerful platform upon which products are designed and delivered. The SOLIDWORKS vision of a platform-based solution aligns well with CIMdata's view of today's accelerating era of product innovation platforms enabling product lifecycle management (PLM).

Mr. Bernard Charlès, President and CEO of SOLIDWORKS' parent company, Dassault Systèmes, took the stage to highlight the company's 11 brands that target 12 different industries. During Mr. Charlès' presentation he intrigued many in the audience by stating that he wants Dassault Systèmes to become number one in the architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) industry, at least for the large industrial segment such as plant design and off-shore drilling platforms, as opposed to individual building architectural design. CIMdata views that goal as a hefty challenge given the current market dynamics and also difficult-to-track market share numbers since most solution providers do not report sales at the level of granularity required to understand the AEC market's size.

Ms. Monica Menghini, Executive Vice President, Chief Strategy Officer at Dassault Systèmes, took the stage to emphasize the company's product innovation platform strategy for SOLIDWORKS users. As she has done in past events, Ms. Menghini highlighted the need for products to provide not only a rewarding experience in their use, but also a positive consumer buying experience, noting that "experiences are the new innovation." She neatly tied Dassault Systèmes' strategy of an innovation platform together with their 3DEXPERIENCE platform of solutions. As CIMdata has previously recognized, Dassault Systèmes has invested extensive time and effort in developing and presenting the "user experience" strategy theme for their company and products.

Mr. Bassi retook the main stage and highlighted the diversity of solutions SOLIDWORKS is working on for future delivery. In a surprising, understated manner, he spoke of the three pillars of SOLIDWORKS products: desktop, connected, and on-line solutions. The new suite of future on-line solutions will be branded as "Xsomething" apps. He introduced the first called Xdrive. This app will provide 5 gigabytes of cloud storage with each future license of

SOLIDWORKS 2017. Mr. Bassi noted that users would be able to define a mash-up of data from any number of on-line sources such as Dropbox.

Mr. Bassi also described Parts Supply—a 3D content central repository with geometric search capabilities. Then, with little fanfare, he spoke of efforts to develop a new cloud-based CAD product. While he kept his statements short and to the point, CIMdata later learned that the new product would run in a browser and likely be based on Dassault Systèmes' CGM geometry kernel (the same kernel that is used by CATIA V6). No delivery dates were promised.

Following the first day's general session, SOLIDWORKS users fanned out to over 200 breakout sessions covering a wide range of product topics and training. Dassault Systèmes executives structured a separate, more private track for the press and industry analyst communities. These communities were treated to a session with Mr. Louis Feinstein, Product Manager, SOLIDWORKS, and Mr. Aram Mirkazemi, CEO, Altium, who detailed a new SOLIDWORKS solution for PCB design. In partnership with Altium, SOLIDWORKS will introduce a standalone PCB design application called SOLIDWORKS/PCB, which is Altium's full Altium Designer software repackaged into a familiar SOLIDWORKS environment and user interface. The new solution will also allow the display of SOLIDWORKS 3D models inside the ECAD application. A sister product named SOLIDWORKS/PCB Connector (which in reality is standard SOLIDWORKS with an optional connector to the new PCB solution) will allow PCB models to be imported into SOLIDWORKS. They noted that the existing PCBWorks product will be discontinued. CIMdata sees this solution as a much needed advancement in light of the growing use of electronics in product design.

In yet another interesting session, Mr. John Gould, President, Americas for Stratasys detailed their partnership with Adobe to broaden adoption of 3D printing with a new color experience and simplified workflow. They introduced the release of Stratasys Creative Colors Software, powered by the Adobe 3D Color Print Engine, for its Objet Connex3 3D Printing solutions. The solution forms a direct bridge between Adobe Photoshop Creative Colors and the Objet Connex3. Stratasys promises that by incorporating multiple gradient colors, patterns, and textures, combined with the 3D printer's multi-material capabilities, a model produced on the Objet Connex3 can have the same look and feel as the final intended product. As part of their announcement, Stratasys indicated that the older 3D printer models, Connex1 and Connex2, would be retired.

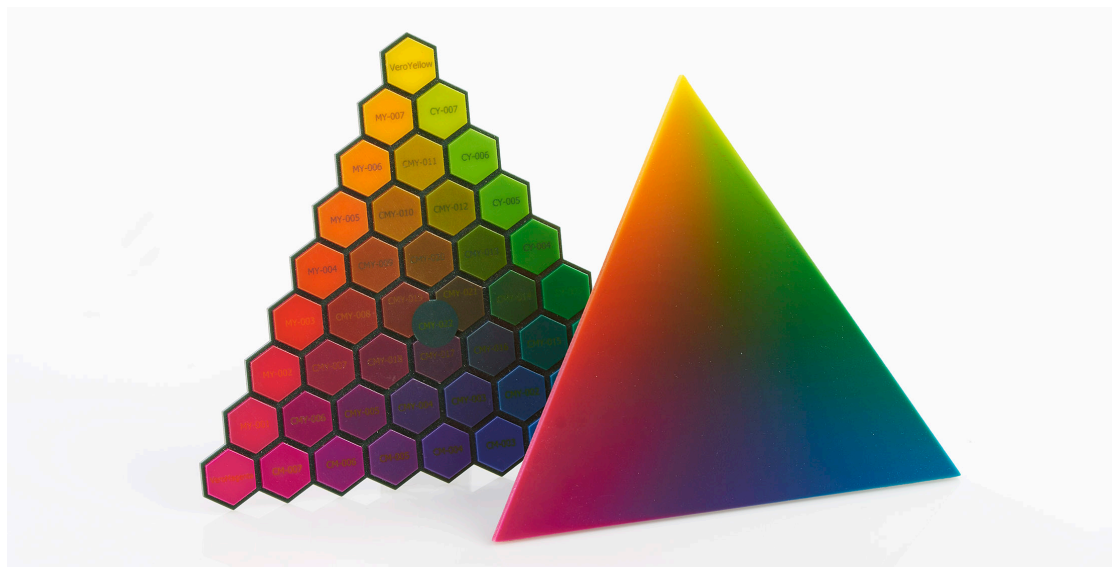


Figure 1—Transitioning the 46 Color Pallet to 1000+ Gradient Colors
(Image Courtesy of Stratasys)

It was noted that the color mapping from the screen to the 3D printer has been streamlined by delivering “what you see is what you get” and expanding the workable color pallet from a restrictive 46 colors to over 1,000.

CIMdata believes SOLIDWORKS is indeed moving broadly into the future on behalf of their users. While continuing to deliver quality CAD capabilities with the latest SOLIDWORKS 2016 release, they are embracing new technology directions in cloud delivery and in expanding mechanical combined with electrical design to support both today’s and future user products. SOLIDWORKS World 2016’s attendees were treated to a wide range of new directions for SOLIDWORKS, from new partnerships to new software capabilities and implementations. CIMdata can affirm the future of SOLIDWORKS users is in good hands.

About CIMdata

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