COMMENTARY

Dassault Systèmes Analyst Event

At the Farnborough International Airshow, 23 July 2026

Takeaways

Dassault Systèmes is fully committed to AI as a major new source of value and revenue, and to virtual twin as the foundational construct for navigating and extracting value from the enterprise product information asset.

Several startups provided persuasive examples of the power of Dassault Systèmes' virtual twin, simulation, collaboration, and AI capabilities to enable speed and agility.

An eclectic mix of companies reported success applying 3D UNIV+RSES—3D modeling, virtual twin simulations, and AI engines—to optimize product lifecycle outcomes, whether the product is an electronic control system, an automotive component, a nuclear power plant, or a bottle cap.

Dassault Systèmes' A&D market priorities include a continued emphasis on OEMs and their supply base, with expansion potential in defense and innovation startups. A&D solution priorities include AI, data sovereignty, tailored solutions for startups, and standards.

Conversations with A&D customers have shifted: they are evaluating whether to rebalance between commercial and defense; sovereignty is no longer optional; and they have AI concerns, such as ROI and the threat of Shadow AI.

As the season of summer breaks comes to an end it is a good time to reflect on the significant events of this quite time of year. For CIMdata, an important event was the day spent as a guest of Dassault Systèmes in their chalet at the Farnborough International Airshow on the 23rd of July. This was our first time at the biannual event, and we were struck by the mix of history and futurism on display across the sprawling venue.[1]

The very modern Dassault Systèmes chalet is a beautiful and thoughtfully design building with comfortable spaces for small scale presentations, demonstrations, and curated executive conversations. The open patio, with gathering spaces, provided a grand view of the runway and aerial performances.

The day was perfectly orchestrated as a mix of experiences: direct discussions with Dassault Systèmes executives, thought leadership presentations, customer experience panels, demonstrations, and open time for mingling with other guests and reflection. We came away with a renewed appreciation of Dassault Systèmes' achievements and positioning for future success within aerospace and defense.

[1] Research for this paper was partially supported by Dassault Systèmes

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Executive Meeting with Morgan Zimmermann, CEO, 3DEXPERIENCE

The day began with a presentation and discussion with Mr. Morgan Zimmermann, CEO, 3DEXPERIENCE. Mr. Zimmermann is passionate about the intersection of digital thread, virtual twin, and AI, and the capacity of 3DEXPERIENCE to deliver value in this space. In his view, the virtual twin is the critical organizing construct for knowledge workers and decision makers from any domain across the extended enterprise to navigate and understand product-related data. From development through manufacture to in-service support, the virtual twin is enriched with content from within the Dassault Systèmes solution portfolio and other enterprise applications to provide a comprehensive navigable virtual representation of an aircraft, its behaviors, and the methods and means by which it has progressed through the lifecycle to its current state. It is against the intellectual content of the virtual twin that AI can be effectively applied.

Such a broad vision and rich value proposition elicited questions regarding the maturity of industrial application. Mr. Zimmermann cited the Rafale fighter program where over 70 data sources are drawn from to construct a virtual twin that support AI applications utilized by knowledge workers in myriad roles throughout the lifecycle.

Panel: Innovating at the Speed of Relevance

In addition to the private sessions for the analysts in attendance, panel sessions were held in the open space for the analysts and the other executive attendees. The first was an assemblage of four companies that use the Dassault Systèmes portfolio to enable very rapid development cycles. From a review of the self-descriptions below, it can be argued that Dassault Systèmes' ability to assemble such a panel is noteworthy.

Mr. Charles-Antoine Koch, Business Development Manager, Destinus—"Built around a hard reality: modern defence is shaped by the age of mass-produced threats. It is no longer defined by a few exquisite platforms, but rather by scale enabled by intelligence and delivered at an industrial tempo. The mission is clear: to strengthen Europe's security and strategic autonomy through advanced, affordable, cost-asymmetric systems. Made in Europe. Made for Europe."

Ms. Jennifer Young, European Business Development Manager, Harmattan AI—"Build defense systems that fuse AI, sensing, and mission intelligence into a unified operational capability. Engineered to interpret and act on data at the edge in real-time, our systems operate without dependency on centralized infrastructure while ensuring human decision authority. Developed alongside frontline operators, they deliver autonomous execution at the speed modern operations demand."

Mr. Ross Hilditch, Head of UK Products & Engineering, TEKEVER UK—"Shaping the future of Defence and Security through AI-driven autonomy, delivering capabilities that protect lives, infrastructures and nations. Operating at the pace of innovation and the urgency of the mission, we turn frontline experience into strategic advantage. Our purpose is clear: stay ahead, move faster, and build the edge that safeguards what matters most—anytime and anywhere."

Mr. David King, Chief Engineer, Vertical Aerospace—"Progressive. Meticulous. Dedicated. A world-class team of engineering ingenuity; doers, idealists and pragmatists. Together we're working to realize the potential of electric aviation, from direct transport links to cleaner, quieter urban environments. Only by challenging what we know, and how things are done will we make the dream of all-electric air travel a reality."

And the experiences they shared were fascinating. Just a sample:

- Destinus commented on the need to match country-specific technical standards, and they are working with others to change the European mindset.
- Harmattan AI initially built drones; software came later. With demands of the Ukraine war, they faced the need to train operators and are using AI for processing near real-time feedback from front line operators to enhance field training.
- TEKEVER was a startup in 2001. Initially software-centric, they expanded into aviation. With the advent of the war in Ukraine, they moved into military applications. They use AI to navigate defense regulations in multiple countries. For them collaboration and partnering is absolutely necessary. Learning from their experience in Ukraine, they now collaborate with the operator on the frontlines.
- Vertical Aerospace found development of new electric and vertical takeoff and landing aircraft to be daunting. It is critical to execute many iterations prior to freezing design and virtual twin is key. They found that simulation does not reduce but actually increases the rigor of certification and a winning strategy for acceleration is to integrate simulation models from 3rd parties for different regulatory requirements.
- All panelists emphasized the need for speed, the importance of collaboration, especially with the end user, e.g., Ukraine users on the battlefield; and the value of partnership, i.e., "I will use yours in mine rather than build it over again myself."

These stories were genuine and inspiring. They were persuasive examples of the power of Dassault Systèmes virtual twin, simulation, collaboration, and AI capabilities to enable speed.

Lunch with Anissa Marouard Bellini, Vice President, Industry Excellence

The analysts at the day's event were privileged to be joined by Ms. Anissa Bellini for a private lunch. The conversation was casual. Ms. Bellini was open and shared her philosophy and approach for harvesting insights from industry to help guide Dassault Systèmes' portfolio priorities within and across their twelve target industries. It was impressive to observe how sincerely interested Ms. Bellini is in the views of others. A few well stated questions stimulated a lively discussion of digital threads, virtual twins, and AI. Some interesting counterpoints were raised to the view of virtual twin as preeminent vis a vis digital thread, and the critical role of use cases for planning and securing value from investment in either.

Apple Vision Pro Demonstration

After lunch, analysts were invited to play maintenance mechanic on the patio. We donned an Apple Vision Pro headset and were guided through the procedure for replacing the camera within a 3DExperience virtual twin of a drone. Very cool!

Panel: Scaling Virtual Twins Across Industries with 3D UNIV+RSES

The second panel was made up of representatives from the eclectic mix of companies listed below who discussed their experiences with 3D UNIV+RSES (pronounced "3D Universes"), announced by Dassault Systèmes in February of this year as their seventh generation of representation of the world.

Mr. Michiel van den Besselaar, Key Account Manager, OMRON Industrial Automation—Creates, sells and services fully integrated automation solutions that include sensing, control, safety, vision, motion, robotics and more.

Mr. Owain Mortimer, Technology Innovation Manager, Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT)—One of the UK's largest and most influential trade associations, founded in 1902. It

represents a wide range of sectors within the automotive industry, including vehicle and engine manufacturing, R&D, technology, software, servicing, and the supply chain.

Ms. Debbie Kempton, Director of Engineering Programme, UK Fusion Energy (UKFE)—Lead the world in fusion energy research with a range of programs covering plasma science, robotics, materials testing and development, and tritium science.

Mr. Daniel Stokes, Digital Design Manager, Unilever Packaging—Packaging plays a vital role in the safe and efficient distribution of products. They use science to evaluate the environmental impact of possible solutions to the plastic waste problem. They apply life cycle assessment and thinking to guide sustainable choices and avoid any unintended consequences.

The panelists shared their early experiences applying 3D modeling, virtual twin simulations, and AI engines to optimize designs and product behaviors. They joked with each other that they were using the same solutions in the same ways to achieve new value propositions whether the product was an electronic control system, an automotive component, a nuclear power plant, or a bottle cap. In fact, this was a key takeaway of the session.

Executive Meeting with David Ziegler, VP Aerospace & Defense

A closed session late in the day with Mr. David Ziegler provided the perfect opportunity to explore three questions that are important to an analyst.

1. Within the breadth of aerospace and defense where do you see the greatest opportunities for Dassault Systèmes?
2. What are the value points within the Dassault Systèmes solution portfolio that you plan to apply to succeed with those opportunities?
3. What is your strategy for successful positioning and engagement with customers and prospects?

Mr. Ziegler was forthcoming and generous in this conversation.

For Mr. Ziegler, market priorities include a continuing emphasis on OEMs and their supply base. Defense will be of greater interest for the next few years. Engaging with innovators, such as those on today's first panel, is a rich opportunity, and a key learning is the importance of getting to them early. From a geographic perspective, the US and Europe continue to be the major markets, but Mr. Ziegler sees significant growth in Asia, in Korea for example. And India is very interesting.

Mr. Ziegler enumerated solution priorities that include AI, data sovereignty, configurations for innovators, and standards. When asked, he immediately responded that AI will be a significant revenue stream for Dassault Systèmes.

Regarding customer and prospect engagement, Mr. Ziegler commented that conversations have shifted. Customers are evaluating whether they should reposition between commercial and defense. Sovereignty is no longer optional; it is an absolute requirement at the country level and at the corporate level regarding control of their intellectual assets.

AI is a changing the customer conversation. All customers are concerned that they have invested heavily in AI without achieving returns. Another concern is the threat posed by Shadow AI.[2]

[2] Shadow AI refers to employees using AI tools—such as ChatGPT, Gemini, or Copilot—without approval or oversight from IT or security teams, creating risks like data leakage, compliance violations, and security blind spots.

Final Word

The global aerospace and defense industry is in transition, and a new value landscape is taking shape with blending of the virtual and real, advances in simulation, and explosive progression of AI agency. It is clear that Dassault Systèmes understands and has taken a leadership position in this generational transformation.

About CIMdata

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