

Active Workspace: A Window into Enterprise PLM

CIMdata Commentary

Key takeaways:

- Siemens PLM Software's Active Workspace provides users a customizable, graphically rich interface into PLM data and functionality
- Active Workspace users benefit from being able to quickly find and execute their daily work responsibilities within one unified, consistent, user managed environment
- Within Active Workspace users can opt for an integrated Geometric Shape Search (i.e., 3D search) in addition to traditional text search

The expansion of Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) software throughout the enterprise has provided users in many non-engineering positions including business managers, marketing, sales, and service support, with improved access to enterprise PLM data. However, as the reach of PLM enabling solutions has grown, so also has the pressure to improve and simplify the user experience. The new class of extended enterprise users expects effortless and intuitive interaction with PLM data and associated functionality. Siemens PLM Software (Siemens) developed Active Workspace to provide a proficient, consistent, and graphically rich user experience into the realm of PLM data and applications. CIMdata long anticipated that the growth of PLM into the broader enterprise would require improvements in ease of use and recognizes Siemens' Active Workspace for its impact.

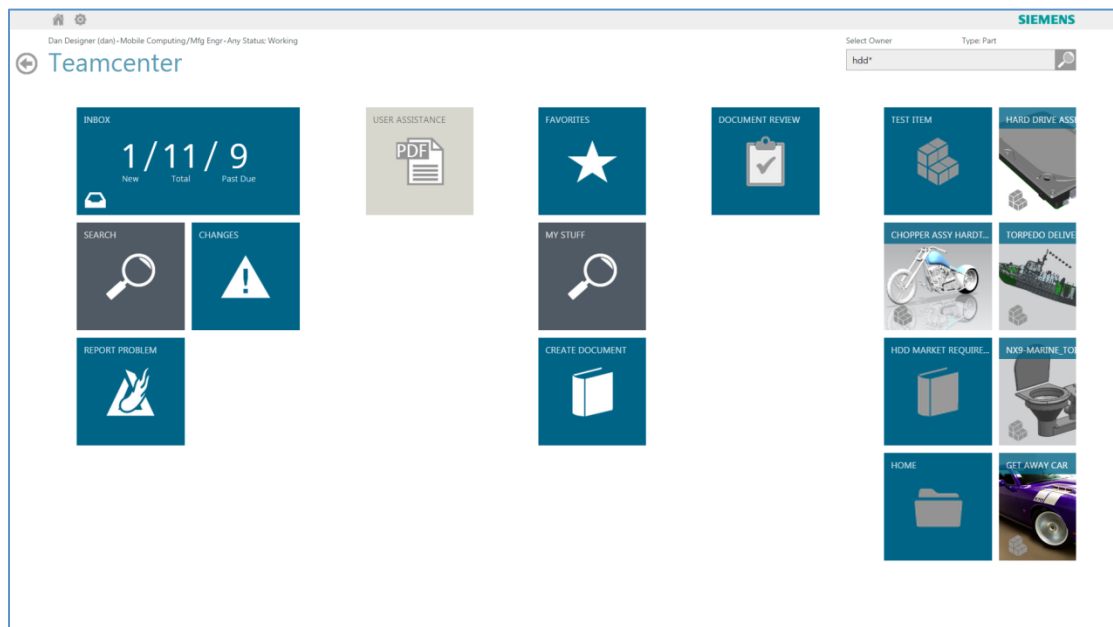


Figure 1 — Accessing the Enterprise through the gateway of Active Workspace
(Courtesy of Siemens PLM Software)

Active Workspace presents a user-interaction model that supports visual decision-making and collaboration across the extended enterprise. Siemens emphasizes the fundamental concepts of Active Workspace with the keywords: personalized, proactive, intuitive, and everywhere. Users can customize their instance of the interface to best fit their specific

needs. Users may also configure Active Workspace for a specific industry, group, or role, guaranteeing they see only relevant tasks and data.

Active Workspace is a component of the Siemens Teamcenter portfolio and runs in a range of browsers on desktop computers, laptops, tablets, and mobile devices. The only requirement is that the browser must support HTML5¹ and the latest Cascading Style Sheets language, CSS3.² The layout follows Microsoft's Metro look and feel with screen tiles that allow the user to open their inbox, their home folder, and any saved searches. Tiles can be pinned to the home page (gateway), sized, and positioned as the user wishes.

In the main work area of Active Workspace, users can select and access product requirements, create and view product designs, explore product structures, and participate in and execute workflow assignments. CIMdata welcomes Active Workspace's ability to collect all the important data and task action controls in one unified, consistent, user-managed environment. Active Workspace users will benefit from being able to quickly find and execute their daily work responsibilities.

Searching the PLM Repository

Active Workspace includes a textual search capability that allows users to locate the PLM data they need. Using a familiar Search bar in the upper-right of the Active Workspace window, users can enter their search text. The traditional wildcard asterisk (*) and logic operators of AND, OR, and NOT are supported.

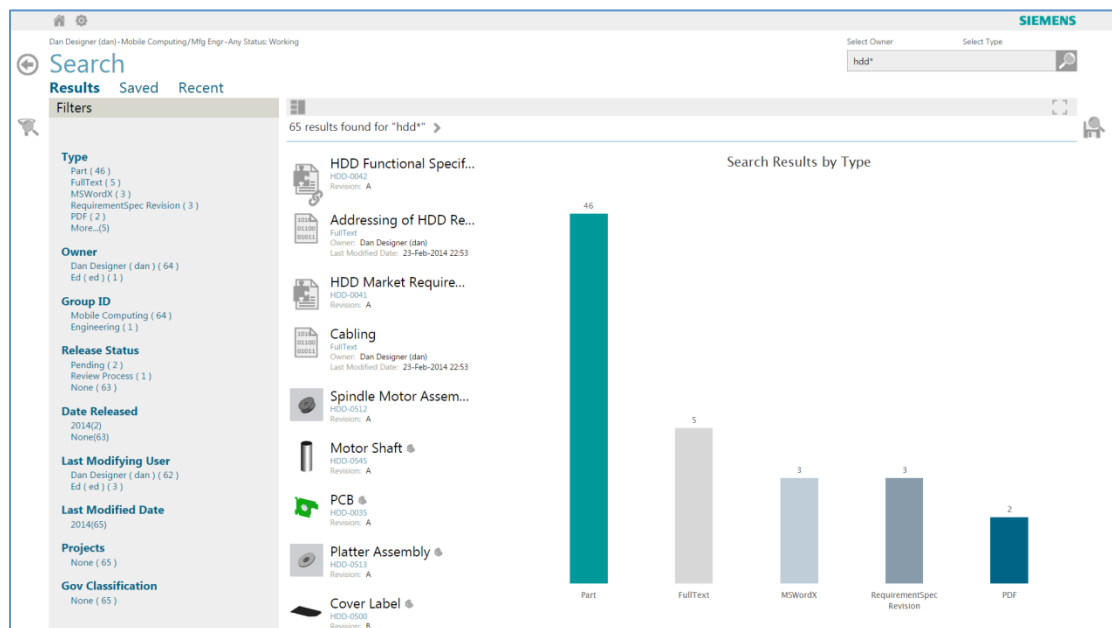


Figure 2—Exploring Search Results and Potential Filters
(Courtesy of Siemens PLM Software)

Active Workspace presents search results in an intelligent, easily readable layout showing potential filters including object type, owner, and release status that can be applied to further narrow the search. A bar chart illustrates the count of results by a specified filter that provides the user insights into the results distribution within the PLM repository or relevant PLM data in

¹ For more information on the latest revision of Hypertext Markup Language, HTML5, see <http://www.w3.org/TR/html5/>.

² For more information on CSS, see <http://www.w3.org/Style/CSS/>.

external and third-party repositories. Users may drill down to narrow the search by double clicking on the bar chart. For example, when double clicking on the Part bar in Figure 2, Active Workspace will display the next level chart based on the Owners of the data. As the search progresses, Active Workspace displays “breadcrumbs” reflecting the sequence of filters that have been applied keeping users informed of the narrowing search criteria (as seen in Figure 3). CIMdata believes this style of graphical results presentation will be readily accepted across the enterprise as more non-engineering organizations interact with PLM data.

In an industry leading move, Siemens integrates the technology of 3D geometric shape search in Active Workspace. Often a simple search based on text attributes cannot clearly identify and locate the desired component model. Part shape becomes the defining factor. Using a shape search capability, product engineers benefit when looking for a previously designed component model to use in their current design. Active Workspace geometric search provides sliding bar controls to filter the search criteria by shape similarity and by size. In the extended enterprise, procurement, field service, and other business related organizations benefit from these expanded options as they search for a part that may not be exact, but is similar to a target reference model.

A keyword search alone could not have brought together the collection of parts shown in Figure 3—a shape search is required to accomplish this. Their geometric similarity could be of great interest to procurement, maintenance or on the production line.

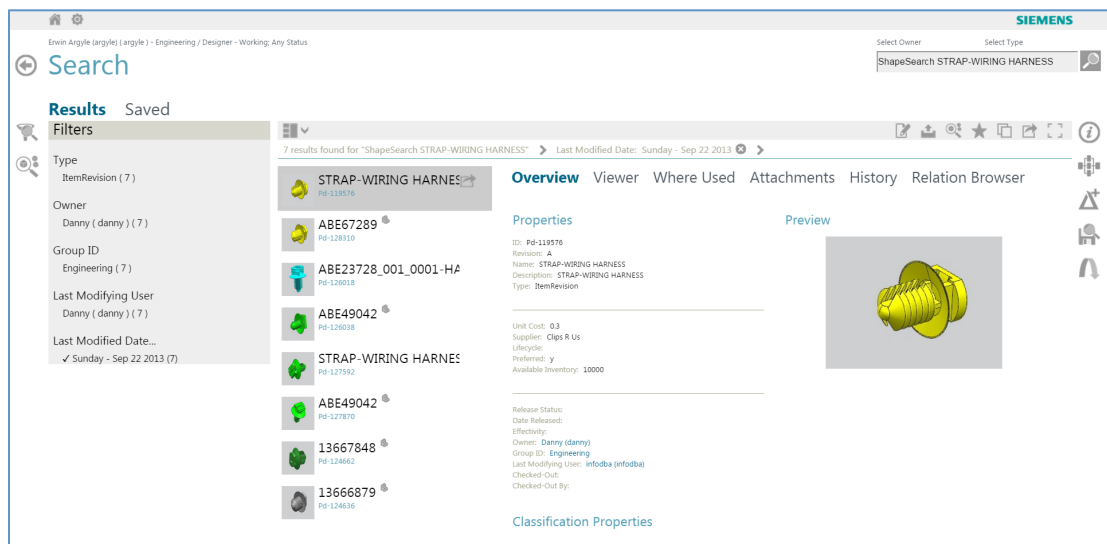


Figure 3—Tracing the Geometric Search
(Courtesy of Siemens PLM Software)

CIMdata has previously projected that the technologies of text and geometric shape search would merge. Within Active Workspace Siemens is leading the efforts to combine these two search capabilities to the benefit of their users.

As PLM functionality spreads throughout the extended enterprise, CIMdata advises that companies pay close attention to its adoption and acceptance by users supporting non-engineering, product related organizations. The benefits that PLM can deliver are directly related to its broad use. A consistent, yet flexible, interface to PLM data and functionality is key. An interface that is intuitive and available on a wide range of devices without requiring installation is fundamental. For users of Siemens' suite of PLM enabling solutions, Active

Workspace provides the means for a consistent look and feel and a gateway for the cohesive and productive product development organization.

About CIMdata

CIMdata, an independent worldwide firm, provides strategic management consulting to maximize an enterprise's ability to design and deliver innovative products and services through the application of Product Lifecycle Management (PLM). CIMdata provides world-class knowledge, expertise, and best-practice methods on PLM. CIMdata also offers research, subscription services, publications, and education through international conferences. To learn more about CIMdata's services, visit our website at <http://www.CIMdata.com> or contact CIMdata at: 3909 Research Park Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48108, USA. Tel: +1 734.668.9922. Fax: +1 734.668.1957; or at Oogststraat 20, 6004 CV Weert, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 (0) 495.533.666.