

PTC NEXT Chicago 2026

Takeaways

PTC is transitioning its solutions from passive “Systems of Record” to active “Systems of Intelligence,” aiming to eliminate lifecycle friction by using AI to bridge the gap between design and physical asset maintenance.

PTC has replaced distributed product launches with two unified portfolio launches per year (Spring and Fall).

PTC launched two major portfolio solutions: PTC Jetstream, a multi-tenant SaaS hub for cross-company collaboration, and PTC Orbit, an AI-first product and data layer that connects upfront designs to downstream as-maintained asset states.

PTC introduced a three-tiered strategic framework—Advise, Assist, and Automate—to guide organizations in evolving their AI capabilities from basic decision support to fully autonomous, agentic workflows.

PTC announced massive functionality upgrades across its solution stack, including the AI-enabled Creo 13, expansion of Onshape’s FeatureScript programming language, and a strategic move toward agentic architecture in Codebeamer ALM.

Recently, CIMdata had the opportunity to attend PTC’s 2026 PTC NEXT event in Chicago, held 9-10 June 2026. The event described a significant technological inflection point being faced by organizations across all industries due to the rapid expansion and adoption of artificial intelligence (AI). The event focused on introducing and describing PTC’s “intelligent product lifecycle” (IPL) strategy and how its’ solutions can be used to strengthen an enterprise product data foundation in support of AI and innovation. The event was kicked off by Mr. Neil Barua, PTC’s President and CEO, who emphasized the urgency of change during this great transformational period and how to best deal with the challenges associated with it.

To address these challenges, PTC showcased its evolution from announcing and delivering solutions that traditionally have supported “System of Records” to ones that support a “System of Intelligence” fueled by open systems and a safe, responsible approach to AI. Chief among the product announcements were PTC Jetstream, a multi-tenant SaaS cross-company collaboration hub built to increase delivery speed, and PTC Orbit, an AI-first product and data layer that seamlessly connects upfront product designs to downstream as-maintained asset configurations. Furthermore, the company detailed major updates across its core engineering portfolios, including the launch of Creo 13 with an embedded AI Assistant, numerous Onshape updates, Codebeamer AI’s strategic shift toward an increasingly assisted and automated, agentic approach to application lifecycle management (ALM), and a new AI platform.

The Urgency of Change

During the Day 1 sessions focus was placed on the IPL, Mr. Barua emphasized the “Urgency of Change” in what he termed “The Greatest Transformational Period” ever witnessed. He went on to note that traditional product lifecycles have become a major gating and limiting factor for organizations, creating a clear need for a new way forward that eliminates friction throughout the lifecycle. To better support the rapid changes the market is witnessing, PTC announced that it has replaced its distributed product launches with two unified portfolio launches per year (Spring and Fall). PTC’s shift to portfolio-based product releases has been designed to proactively drive its IPL vision, and thereby enable manufacturers to more easily build comprehensive AI strategies and digital transformation roadmaps. In addition, by consolidating major updates into Spring and Fall seasons, PTC is providing its customers with a highly predictable timeline to access new data and capabilities. This is a very positive announcement and one that illustrates PTC’s comprehensive and holistic solution approach to supporting its’ clients.

Regarding the all-important topic of AI, Mr. Barua noted that the AI journey will continue to be a “roller coaster” with its story still being written. Mr. Barua emphasized that AI must exist in service of humans, with PTC positioning itself as a safe and responsible AI partner. To take advantage of the transformational possibilities that are all round us, the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DoE) Digital Strategy Officer, Mr. Stephen Olive explained that modernization transformations require companies to act quickly by first creating a robust Digital Thread and then layering AI directly on top of it. This is sound advice that should be followed. AI needs a strong and consistent data foundation, without it, AI will fail to deliver measurement benefits.

Major Product Announcements

PTC’s Chief Product Officer, Mr. Jon Stevenson, during his keynote address, stated that PTC has reached a significant inflection point, launching a massive wave of functionality that includes a new AI platform, 10 new connectors and integrations, 12 new AI agents and assistants, and over 100 new product features across its portfolio, many of which are already shipping. He went on to comment that this rollout is anchored by three major new announcements:

- **New AI platform**—This new platform introduces a unified “Intelligence Layer” across PTC’s solution portfolio, including Creo, Windchill, Codebeamer, and ServiceMax. It leverages 12 specialized AI agents to automate product design, optimize the service supply chain, ensure compliance, and securely streamline workflows across the product lifecycle.
- **PTC Jetstream**—A cross-company collaboration hub delivered as a multi-tenant SaaS offering. It increases speed and provides a simple collaborative solution that eliminates the need for other collaboration tools. He emphasized that PTC Jetstream is completely powered by product data, connected through open systems, and fueled by AI.
- **PTC Orbit**—An AI-first SaaS product designed to connect upfront AI-driven designs directly to the digital twins and digital threads of down-stream “as-maintained” asset states. PTC Orbit features an AI-data layer, utilizing AWS and leveraging Snowflake data sources.

Additionally, Mr. Stevenson commented that PTC is actively practicing what it preaches by implementing AI agents internally under strict governance frameworks to speed up its own software development processes.

The sheer number and richness of PTC’s announced new solutions and capabilities is impressive. The pace at which these are being delivered is also impressive and one wonders if PTC will be able to accomplish everything it has planned—only time will tell.

Framework for AI Maturity

PTC outlined a three-tiered framework to define its AI maturity path: Advise, Assist, and Automate. This three-tiered AI maturity framework serves as the strategic roadmap for transforming legacy product lifecycle management (PLM) enabling solutions from passive repositories into active “Systems of Intelligence.” This progressive path outlines how AI evolves from a basic search and recommendation tool into an autonomous digital colleague working across the product lifecycle.

Advise

This foundational tier of the framework focuses on providing engineers with intelligent decision support and rapid data discovery without changing the actual data creation workflow. At this level, the AI operates purely in service of the human user, acting as an advanced knowledge partner. Main capabilities include Context-Aware Discovery, Design and Compliance Insights, and Vulnerability Mapping.

Assist

This middle tier represents a shift from passive observation to interactive co-creation. At this level, the AI functions as a digital co-pilot, directly participating in the engineering and overall product development process. Main capabilities include Interactive Design Companions, Requirement Breakdown, and Code Interoperability.

Automate

The final and most advanced tier of the maturity path transitions from a localized “embedded application” approach to a fully autonomous, “agentic” paradigm. Main capabilities include Autonomous Digital Agent, Cross-System Synchronization, and Governance-Bounded Autonomy.

PTC’s framework is practical and consistent with the current state of AI enablement, and it should prove to be flexible and implementable as AI enablement continues to rapidly evolve. While there is currently much talk about agentic AI, it is important to note that CIMdata believes that advise- and assist-based AI will continue to play critical roles in PLM-enablement. As CIMdata has stated for years, humans will be augmented with AI, and they need to be part of the innovation loop—not bystanders.

Key CAD & PLM Updates

PTC made a number of key CAD- and PLM-related announcements during the day and a half event. CAD-related announcements included:

- **Creo 13**—Announced as a very large release featuring a native AI Assistant alongside more than 100 new enhancements as Creo continues to support complex product development for over 17,000 customers.
- **Onshape**—Positioned to meet the real-time collaboration needs of modern engineering organizations. In 2026, Onshape is executing a rapid release cycle every three weeks (i.e., 17 per year), supported by a brand-new Onshape-to-Windchill integration and an NVIDIA partnership.
- **FeatureScript Expansion**—Onshape’s FeatureScript programming language is being introduced to Creo, allowing companies to use AI to drive native designs via a language the system inherently understands. PTC has already built a FeatureScript Model Context Protocol (MCP) and Cody¹ Agent to support this.

¹ AI-powered coding assistant developed by Sourcegraph

PTC's PLM core, aka Windchill, is evolving from a traditional System of Record into a System of Intelligence. Crucially, customers do not need to undergo a full Windchill upgrade to access the new AI capabilities being announced, as they are delivered dynamically via plugins. For cloud deployments, Windchill+ continues to maintain a strict focus on cybersecurity with many of the new AI capabilities being released there first.

It is important to note that PTC defines a "System of Intelligence" as a unified data platform, the foundation of which is Windchill, designed to bridge the gap between how a product is designed (i.e., the digital model) and how it is maintained in the real world (i.e., the physical asset). This clearly moves Windchill from being a repository to being an organization's AI and innovation foundation. CIMdata agrees with this and has been preaching this ever since the release of the Product Innovation Platform concept more than ten years ago.

ALM, PLE & Industry Verticals

In the Application Lifecycle Management (ALM) space, PTC's VP, Mr. Mark Simpson, highlighted that Codebeamer AI is shifting toward an autonomous, agentic approach rather than an embedded AI application model. This architecture enables semantic, context-aware search capabilities.

For Product Line Engineering (PLE), the capabilities of Pure Variants are being directly exposed within Codebeamer, with shipping scheduled for October. The technical notes highlight an operational distinction between these domains: ALM structures its data using product streams, whereas PLM relies on effectivity logic. With an integration of Windchill the best of both worlds has been bridged.

Finally, it was announced that for specialized industries, PTC launched a dedicated Med Tech validation offering, which utilizes an outside validation partner to streamline regulatory compliance. This is a significant announcement that should be well received by PTC's Med Tech clients who have often delayed their upgrades due to the time and effort related to system validation.

Details related to these, and other announcements, were provided during a set of parallel breakout sessions. Details shared and the questions answered shed additional light on the significant amount of information provided on the main stage. This was very helpful and enlightening.

Business Transformation & Tool Consolidation

The final sessions focused on how leading global organizations navigate disruption and tool consolidation during major R&D transformations. The event concluded with insights from Mr. Kevin Gaskell. As past CEO of Porsche, Lamborghini, and BMW, Mr. Gaskell led hugely successful turnarounds and business growth. Today he remains actively involved in numerous companies worldwide, as both an investor and founder, including the UK's fastest-growing B2B fiber network provider. During his closing keynote, Mr. Gaskell emphasized the critical importance of unlocking human potential during today's technical shifts, noting that as technology adoption accelerates, the overall difficulty of managing organizational change continues to increase. Ultimately, people cannot be taken out of the innovation equation. CIMdata can't agree more—technologies augment, humans innovate!

Concluding Remarks

PTC NEXT Chicago was the flagship event for PTC's Spring 2026 Innovation Season. The conference introduced PTC's "Intelligent Product Lifecycle" strategy, featuring two new cross-portfolio solutions, a unified AI platform with 12 AI agents, and major updates across PTC's core software lineup. This event

represents a new and agile way in which PTC is delivering its messages to the market. It emphasizes how PTC has shifted away from massive, single-venue gatherings like the former LiveWorx in favor of two twice-yearly “Innovation Seasons” (Spring and Fall). The Chicago event served as the launchpad for manufacturers looking to integrate AI into their design, manufacturing, and service pipelines without losing traceability or regulatory compliance. The Fall event is scheduled to be held in Barcelona, Spain, and CIMdata is anxious to hear of all the new innovations that PTC intends to announce.

About CIMdata

CIMdata, a global strategic management consulting firm, provides services designed to maximize an enterprise’s ability to design, deliver, and support innovative products and services. For more than forty years, CIMdata has provided industrial organizations, providers of digital technologies and services, and investment firms with world-class insight, expertise, and best-practice methods on a broad set of product lifecycle management (PLM) topics and the digital transformation they enable. CIMdata also offers research, subscription services, publications, and education through certificate programs and international conferences. To learn more, visit www.CIMdata.com or email info@CIMdata.com.