

3D PDF : Analysis

Adobe announced Acrobat 3D, finally. This is their first foray into 3D. I wrote earlier that they are missing the boat on 3D.

The premise of Acrobat 3D is to enable smooth collaboration amongst various non CAD users within the organization's workflow i.e. sales, marketing, visual merchandising, channel management, etc. who traditionally could not view designs in 3D. With 2D pictures of 3D products, much data is lost, making the process inefficient and unproductive.

For a while now, CRM and PLM vendors have been looking for a good bridge. The only one that existed so far was Autodesk's DWF, which works with AutoCAD / Inventor design files.

However, in the Mechanical Design marketplace, the major houses are:

1. Dassault, which owns CATIA (high-end 3D CAD), Solidworks (mid-market 3D CAD), a PDM called SmarTeam, and a PLM product called Enovia, which IBM Global Services sells and integrated.
2. Parametric, which owns ProE (high-end 3D CAD) and Windchill (PLM)
3. Autodesk
4. UGS (recently LBO'd by Silverlake and Bain)
5. think3 with ThinkDesign, ThinkID, ThinkTeam - all mid-range products.

Given that any 3D Viewer product such as Acrobat 3D will need to pass through a CAD-engineer's hands, to be written into an Acrobat readable format, it is safe to assume that having deep-pocket CAD relationships would be immensely valuable.

So, let us see who has what in terms of viewers:

Autodesk has DWF. No one else has anything else. However, there are some independent viewers out there, Right Hemisphere and TornadoVIZ. In fact, it is Right Hemisphere's technology that enables Acrobat 3D, Adobe Ventures has an investment in the company along with Sequoia Capital, and it would be safe to assume that Adobe will buy this company eventually.

I have heard, however, that Acrobat 3D is a very heavy product. In comparison, TornadoVIZ has a very light-weight technology, which would, by and large, need to be an essential characteristic of any 3D viewer such as the ones under discussion.

While Adobe will try to be Switzerland, and not take a preferred CAD system position, it is likely, they will get locked out of the Autodesk eco-system. If I were Dassault, then, would I want a proprietary viewer (perhaps via a Tornado acquisition), or would I be okay with Adobe's neutral position?

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

About the Author

Silicon Valley Entrepreneur and Strategy Consultant Sramana Mitra writes about Entrepreneurship, Business Strategy, Emerging Technology, Market Moves, and sundry other topics in her Blog "Sramana Mitra on Strategy". Read more of her writings at <http://www.sramanamitra.com>.