PART SOLUTIONS®

CASESTUDY

PHD Incorporated

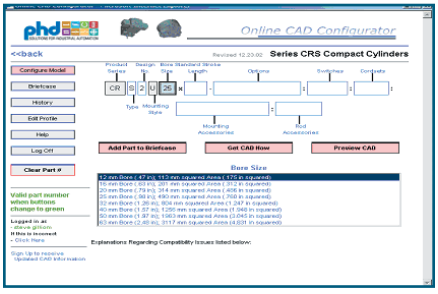
THIRD GENERATION 3D PARTS CATALOGUE CREATES COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR AUTOMATION COMPONENTS SUPPLIER

Since 1957, PHD Inc. has offered solutions for industrial automation. Headquartered in Ft. Wayne IN, PHD offers a full line of premium automation products including cylinders, clamps, escapements, grippers, slides, rotary actuators, proximity sensors and switches, and electro-mechanical devices to provide the motion its customers require. With millions of component variations PHD helps its customers design the ability to move, turn, slide, grip, reach, rotate and clamp almost anything.

As the architect of PHD's electronic data delivery strategy, Steve Gilliom makes it a point to understand PHD's customers' needs.

"We want to make it easy for customers to specify our products into their designs. If we asked them to import data using a neutral format, it could take a couple of hours. Often geometry would be missed or it would come in as a "dumb solid." They couldn't do the animations or kinematics they need for their design process."

Steve Gilliom
Director of Information Technology
PHD, Inc



Using the PHD online configurator customers can build the exact configuration of PHD components they desire and receive a complete 3D CAD file in their CAD system's native format.

PHD Inc. is an automation components supplier that manufactures a broad product line with quick delivery as the basis for its competitive advantage. PHD is a build to order business and offers over 450 million product combinations that are shipped to customers in one to three business days.

"We aren't the biggest in our market, so a key part of our strategy is to be the best in quick delivery," says Steve Gilliom Director of IT for PHD and architect of the company's e-business strategy.

The Moment of Truth: The Design Decision

Now in its third generation of CAD data delivery, PHD has been offering electronic CAD data to its customers for over fifteen years. "With the breadth of our product choices, we realized long ago that an easy to use electronic parts configurator and digital engineering data delivery was critical to our success," continues Gilliom.

"Our long history with providing CAD data as a marketing and customer service tool has taught us that the name of the game is to save our customers design time by reducing time they spend re-modeling our components."

"We want to make it easy for our customers to specify our products into their designs, and subsequently purchase them. If we provide easy and fast access to the right data we get designed in and, given our strong quality and fast delivery, we win the business. If you've got two similar products, the company that can provide the customer's engineer with a CAD file that can save several hours should be the winner. There is no question that our effort to deliver electronic data has paid off for us in new and current business," says Gilliom.

The Customers Speak: 3D, Native Format, Web Available

Until three years ago PHD customers accessed 2D and 3D wireframe CAD files in DXF and IGES format via a CD available from PHD distributors or via software downloaded to the customer's local computer.

PHD works hard to stay close to its customers - to really understand their needs. "About three years ago we realized that the customer's needs had changed significantly. They were using more solids models. And, they wanted to do more things with the model in their own design. In addition they wanted it accessible from the web via a standard browser," said Gilliom.

CAD Independent Yet Native Format

"They were also using a wider variety of CAD systems. We needed to be able to get our parts directly into CAD systems such as Pro/ENGINEER®, SolidWorks®, Unigraphics®, AutoCAD® and others without translation," noted Gilliom. "If we asked the user to import

- Improved customer access and increased sales
- Rapid launch of new products
- Direct inclusion of part numbers leading to simplified customer ordering

data using a neutral format it could take a couple of hours to import and clean up the data. Often geometry would be missed or it would come in as a "dumb solid." They couldn't do the animations or kinematics they need for their design process."

"Therefore even though we'd made a significant investment in delivering CAD models to our customers we discovered we weren't really delivering what the customer now needed."

Experience: Catalogue Vendor Needs To Be CAD Independent

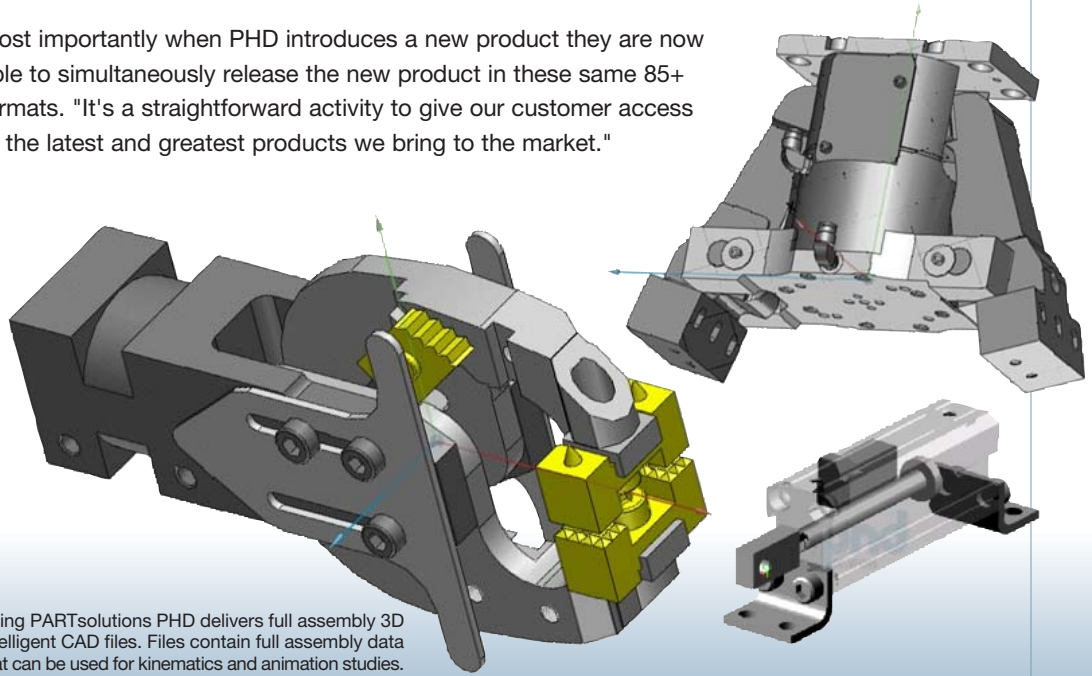
"We looked at four different vendor solutions. One of our big concerns was the viability of our vendor. The fact that PARTsolutions is independent of a CAD company was important to us. Our view is that any CAD company with an offering in this area will struggle. They can't get cooperation to deliver native data in their competitors' formats and as a result those solutions aren't viable long term," Gilliom explained.

PHD rapidly concluded that PARTsolutions was well ahead of the pack. Within six months PHD made the transition - and downright seamlessly at that. "Our original release on PARTsolutions included about ten percent of our product line. We've continued to expand that offering to the point where within two years of the initial offering we have over 80% of our entire active product line available to any customer with a browser, a verifiable email address and a CAD system," Gilliom continued.

Electronic Catalogue Simplifies Product Launch

"We really like the control and flexibility that PARTsolutions offers us. We can maintain our own models in house or use PARTsolutions consultants to help us. If an error is discovered we can fix it quickly and make it available simultaneously in all PARTsolutions 85+ native & neutral CAD and graphic formats."

Most importantly when PHD introduces a new product they are now able to simultaneously release the new product in these same 85+ formats. "It's a straightforward activity to give our customer access to the latest and greatest products we bring to the market."



Using PARTsolutions PHD delivers full assembly 3D intelligent CAD files. Files contain full assembly data that can be used for kinematics and animation studies.

PHD has a long history of providing CAD data to customers. Noticing a demand for 3D native CAD data which could be read into customers' in-house CAD systems without translation, PHD planned the third generation of its electronic data delivery strategy.

"We've seen several catalog companies that are owned by, or associated with CAD companies disappear because this was not a focus or core competency. Our view is that any CAD company with an offering in this area will struggle. They can't get cooperation to deliver native data in their competitors formats and as a result those solutions aren't viable long term."

"We can now include our part numbering information directly in the CAD model. It's particularly important to our customers because it improves order accuracy. Any system based on IGES or STEP simply can't do that completely."

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Director of Information Technology
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phd® SOLUTIONS FOR INDUSTRIAL AUTOMATION

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