



Three Business Trends Shaping PLM Strategies--Are You Prepared?

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Michael Burkett

There are many justifications for a Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) investment, with improved time to value and process efficiency among the most common. However, several recent business developments may lead you to act sooner, or to expand the vision of your PLM process. These developments are the result of increasing competitive pressure, a compliance-conscious businesses environment, and shifts in how companies are trying to innovate. Here's a look at those developments.

Incorporating software and electronic systems into mechanical products

Software and electronics are certainly not new domains, but now more than ever they are adding intelligence and control to traditionally mechanical systems. Increasing safety standards are leading to automotive electronics innovations from automatic brake systems to self-regulating cruise control. The new Boeing 787 passenger airliner will contain more electrical power and control than any previous jetliner, adding efficiencies demanded by airline operators. This requires a PLM strategy that incorporates software, electronic, and mechanical design, requiring integration to the unique authoring tools of each design domain.

Developing environmentally friendly products

New regulations and an increasingly green-conscious consumer are resulting in more environmentally friendly products. Restriction of Hazardous Substances (RoHS) and Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) regulations in Europe are forcing high-tech manufacturers to rethink designing for product disposal. And in Automotive, fuel efficiency requirements lead to new innovations in the popular Chrysler Hemi engine. This requires a clear communication of environmental requirements and support for unique design configurations according to customer location. Bills of materials must provide visibility to component characteristics that affect compliance regulations.

Global product development

No industry is immune to the world economy, which is forcing relationships between global companies to support the innovation demands of local regions. Whether looking at the merged DaimlerChrysler or the Airbus European aircraft manufacturing consortium, mergers and alliances are forcing collaboration across disparate application environments. Manufacturers must consider various levels of integration and interactive design environments to support a global New Product Development and Launch (NPDL) process.

Make sure your PLM process can address these business goals

Many manufacturers have started their PLM deployments within the mechanical or process domains, with a focus on core Product Data Management (PDM), specification management, or perhaps Product Portfolio Management (PPM). While these are core to any PLM deployment, it is essential to stay focused on long-term business direction. While pursuing obvious operational benefits like reduced engineering cycle times, do not miss the link between PLM and the success of executing these long-term strategic business initiatives.