Microsoft improves team collaboration with PTC

The world's leading software company adopts solutions from PTC to manage hardware designs and boost global collaboration

Microsoft is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions. In addition to the Windows operating systems and Office software suite, Microsoft also provides video game consoles, customer relationship management applications, server and storage software, and digital music players. Microsoft's Entertainment and Devices Division (EDD) leads the development efforts for Microsoft's line of consumer software and hardware products. EDD offerings include the Xbox 360 platform, the Zune digital music and entertainment platform, PC software games, online games and services, Mediaroom (Internet protocol television software), the Microsoft Surface computing platform, mobile and embedded device platforms, and other devices.

EDD's engineering and technical teams generate huge amounts of valuable intellectual property, including customer requirements, engineering calculations and detailed CAD designs. Microsoft already had a rich solution for creating and evolving these complex forms of information; as a long-term PTC customer, it uses Pro/Engineer for capturing Class A surfacing – complex mouse shapes, keyboard designs, and game console and controller surfaces. But the EDD group still had a key challenge; it needed to manage all of the day-to-day product data for CAD work in progress. It also wanted to more efficiently share product data with the broader team to improve productivity.

To meet these requirements, Microsoft chose to pilot PTC's Windchill ProductPoint solution within the EDD group. Based in Massachusetts, the US, PTC is a managed Microsoft Gold Certified Global Partner. Through its understanding of structured information such as CAD files, engineering calculations and technical documentation, PTC's Windchill ProductPoint extends the capabilities of Microsoft's SharePoint technology and allows customers to search and find the latest versions of the right files, driving greater team productivity, and extending access to engineering content throughout the company, enabling more reuse and better decision-making. The EDD team especially liked the fact that ProductPoint integrated seamlessly with its existing PTC tools ProductView and Pro/Engineer. "The total integration of the package is what makes it so easy to use," says David Beardsley, surfacing and CAD group manager for PC Hardware at Microsoft.

Almost immediately, ProductPoint users saw productivity gains from being able to manage CAD files more easily. "I remember one specific occasion when I walked over to one of the tooling engineers and showed him what was going on," says Beardsley. "He pulled up a couple of models and he said that within about five minutes he was able to do more work and interact with the data more quickly than he had done thus far."

ProductPoint's familiar interface also helped users get up to speed quickly. "Another great thing about ProductPoint is that it's based on SharePoint, so specifically at Microsoft and for anyone else using SharePoint it makes it really easy to use," says Beardsley. "In fact, we didn't have to do any training – our team just picked it up and were able to run with it right away."

One of the strengths of ProductPoint is in its ability to build on existing SharePoint implementations and extend the native social computing features into product development. "I checked out a model and my colleague down the hallway immediately got the toaster pop-up, just like you see in Outlook when you get an e-mail, saying that I had just checked out one of his models and it's about to be modified," says Beardsley. "So it helps the whole team understand what's going on, who's using what model and it makes it easier for everybody to work together."

Windchill ProductPoint employs a robust versioning and mapping engine that tracks design histories and changing file dependencies. The software automatically increments new file versions, but otherwise lets companies implement their own file-naming schemes. Its CAD-specific search engine makes it easy to find the most current parts and assemblies by letting people search on metadata as well as conventional part names and numbers. For example, a design engineer could ask to see all parts supplied by a specific vendor, all parts attached to the rear axle, or all parts manufactured between April and June.

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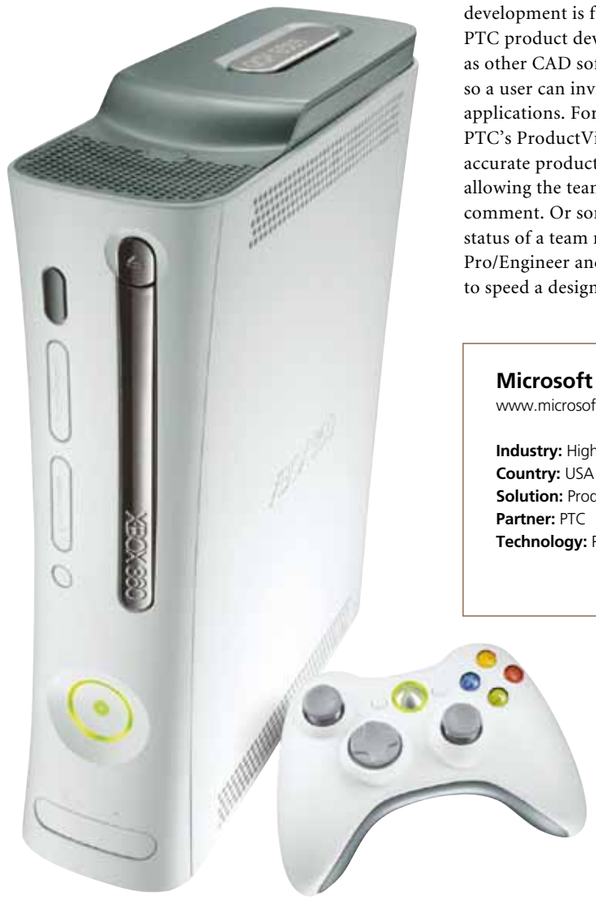
Windchill ProductPoint adds a layer of intelligence that extends the functionality of Windows SharePoint Services by enabling vaulting, sharing, and reuse of CAD models and other structured product content. It allows for capturing and analysing data interrelations, so that, based on individuals' past project involvement and their frequency of accessing particular CAD models, the system can suggest value-enhancing connections to be made with other team members. With a vision of tracking rich content and personnel relationships, Windchill ProductPoint enables effective social product development.

PTC's solution for social product development is fully integrated with other PTC product development solutions, as well as other CAD software and Microsoft Office, so a user can invisibly interact across applications. For example, someone can use PTC's ProductView to send a lightweight, yet accurate product viewable to a forum, allowing the team a chance to review and comment. Or someone can check the online status of a team member from within Pro/Engineer and initiate an instant message to speed a design decision. P



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Industry: High tech
Country: USA
Solution: Product lifecycle management
Partner: PTC
Technology: PTC Windchill ProductPoint, Microsoft SharePoint