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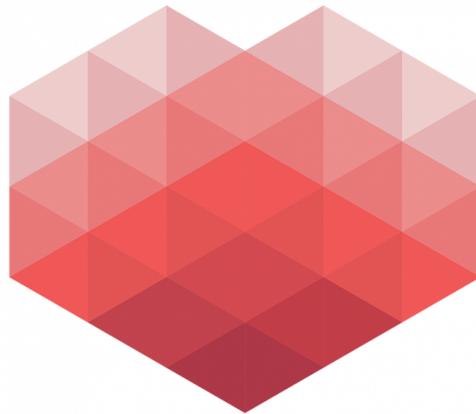
Michael Petch

Michael Petch is the editor-in-chief at 3DPI and the author of several books on 3D printing. He is a regular keynote speaker at technology conferences where he has delivered presentations such as ... [\[Read More\]](#)

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that [3D Hubs](#) has bought 3D optimization company [Printivate](#) and what the next steps for the company might be.

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“So the 3D printing ordering process has always been a very cumbersome process. I’ve tried the old fashioned way, through email, and it typically took me 2 days and about 10 emails to get to the production step. So being an online platform is about making the process a simpler and a lot easier,” de Zwart tells me.

While some companies are making steps in this direction de Zwart says, “it was always very hard for a customer to check if a file was printable. That’s why we made the acquisition because we are in a unique position to lead”

I asked the CEO how the two businesses will be integrated, and whether Printivate will be rebranded as 3D Hubs.

“Printivate will become part of 3D Hubs and that means all the intellectual property they have developed and their founder and CEO (Adrian Muresan) will all become part of our team.” The intention is to integrate the Printivate and simplify the online ordering process by optimizing files for 3D printing.

De Zwart confirmed that 3D Hubs have spent a while looking at the market for a company that would make sense as a strategic acquisition.

“We’ve looked at different options there, and we found that Adrian is a really smart guy and has built amazing technology. So we felt Printivate were the best candidate to become a part of 3D Hubs.”

Printability features

The integration of Printivate into 3D Hubs will take place over, “multiple months and once what [Adrian] has built over the past couple of years is integrated he will continue to work as our R&D lead and continue to come up all sorts of smart innovations that will benefit our users.”

Once the integration takes place users of 3D Hubs can expect improvements around, “file analysis and repair. There will be improvements around the price calculation and the price quotation and the accuracy of that. And then another big thing, I can’t provide exact dates for you, but in 2017 will introduce features around printability protection integrated.”

This printability protection will involve, “understanding the way different 3D printing technologies work and matching that understanding to the design geometry in the different files” that 3D Hubs customers want to print.

I ask if 3D Hubs will be introducing more tools for customers to work directly with the



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the prospect of a collaborative design tool he is silent.

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Turning to the wider 3D printing landscape and current trends in the market de Zwart says he is, *“very optimistic about the future of 3D printing.”* The 3D printing industry, *“has gone through some disillusionment after the hype of 2015. It’s gone through that phase, like almost all new technologies right?”*

3D printing is adding value today in so many firms, to designers, to engineers, to architects and what I see is that it is all becoming more accessible. We’re giving people access more easily, almost with one click. The additional benefit to speed is that someone can advise you locally.

De Zwart is impressed with the way 3D printers are becoming better and views recent investment and market entry by large multinationals such as HP as a positive step that will advance the 3D printing industry as a whole. *“HP are spending \$60 million a year just on R&D in 3D printing, Carbon has raised hundreds of millions. This really shows that things are happening.”*

“I’m optimistic and I think being the largest network of 3D printers we’re in a unique position, because ultimately 3D printing can be the leading technology in moving from a centralized model to a decentralized manufacturing model. By having that network we are in a good position to make that happen.”

“I’m a big believer in decentralized manufacturing,” and de Zwart explains more about why he sees decentralized manufacturing as such an important part of the future, *“because I believe that it makes sense! Things are more efficient, and it’s going to happen eventually making products in England for example, if the customer lives in England it makes more sense to make products in England rather than in China.”*

“Producing products in Asia and then shipping them across the world, just to store” doesn’t make sense. *“There is a long of waiting”* and it is also the associated costs of transport, over production and storage that de Zwart believes 3D printing can reduce, or even eliminate. *“The local on-demand manufacturing model just feels a lot cleaner.”*

At 3DPI we wish 3D Hubs and Printivate well on this next stage of the journey. The news certainly adds weight to the argument that 3D printing is maturing, given the elevated levels of acquisition and consolidation currently taking place.

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