

A win-win situation for providers and customers

(A technical article from 2021, author: Stefan de Groot, Technology Manager and Project Manager Additive Manufacturing, Protiq GmbH, Blomberg)

What has long been established in the consumer sector with platforms such as Amazon or Zalando is increasingly gaining a foothold in industry: on-line marketplaces. In the field of 3D printing, Protiq provides such a solution, which opens up a wide range of benefits for customers and providers alike.



The additive manufacturing industry is enjoying strong growth. The rising demand for components from the 3D printer and the great interest from all industrial sectors offer a wealth of opportunities on both the provider and the customer side. True to its guiding principle "Precise. Fast. Reliable.", the Protiq Marketplace, which now comprises more than 40 providers, meets this market demand and the resulting potential on the part of service providers with an intuitive platform. Especially in times of digitalization, it is of great importance in this business model to give customers the greatest possible transparency and to increase the visibility of the providers.

Instant comparison of different offers

On the Protiq marketplace for additive manufacturing, customers have the option of placing their order for an individual 3D component quickly and intuitively, without having to go through a lengthy process of obtaining quotes. To do so, they can upload a data set of the desired component directly on the Protiq Marketplace homepage.

The upload supports all common 3D data formats. After this step, customers receive direct visual feedback on the component. In addition to the three-dimensional view, they can scale the model.

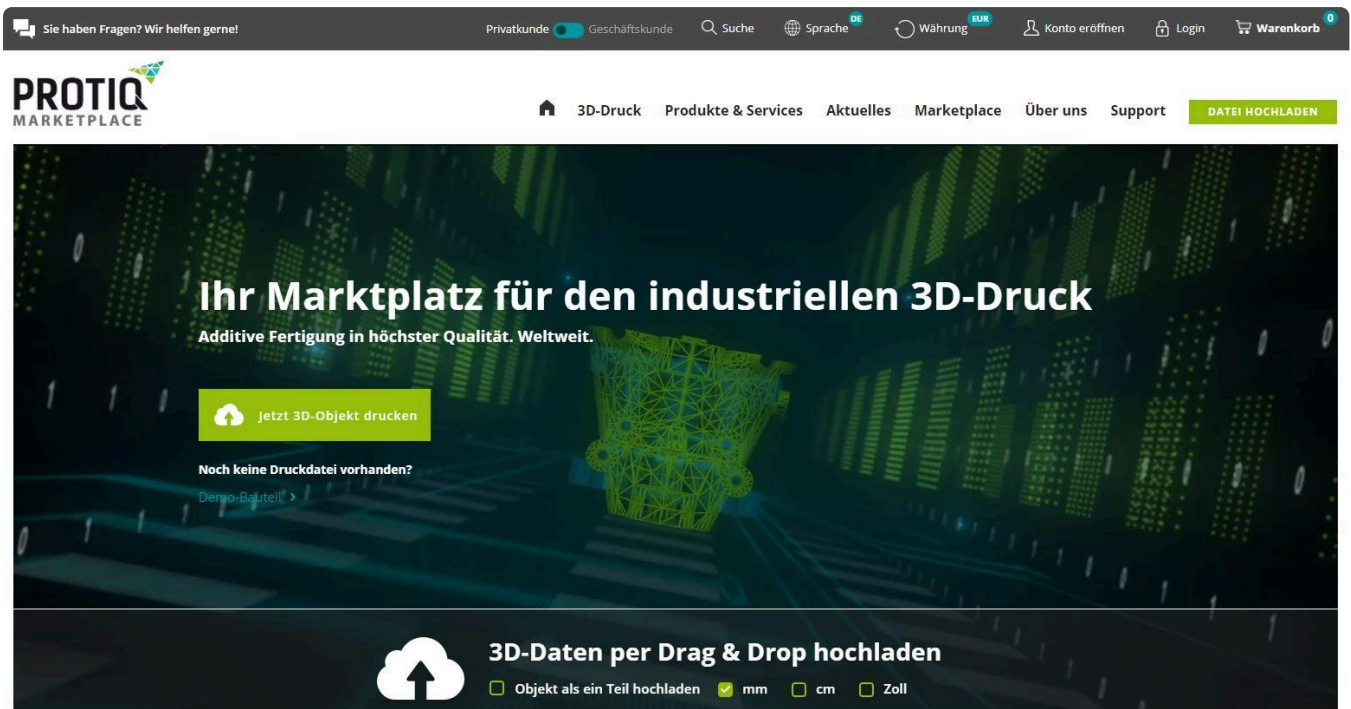
▼ "Precise. Fast. Reliable." – that is the value proposition the Protiq Marketplace, with its more than 40 providers, makes to its customers

Customers can then select the desired material, including optimal post-processing, from the marketplace's entire material portfolio. In this context, they benefit from the live pricing of all providers, whose offers are compared side by side at a glance. Apart from plastics and metals, ceramics, for example, can also be 3D printed. The average delivery time and the shipping costs are also indicated as part of the configuration process.

Easy generation of custom models

No private or business customer account is required to use the functions described. This simplifies and shortens the time-consuming online research on the customer side that goes hand in hand with the conventional process of obtaining quotes. The selection of the right provider for implementing a project can therefore take place immediately.

The configured models can then be transferred to the shopping cart. In addition to the option of entering an internal order number for all accompanying documents, customers can save an official quote for the configuration they have created. In the final step of the ordering



▼ Component data can be uploaded directly on the homepage and then configured in the subsequent process

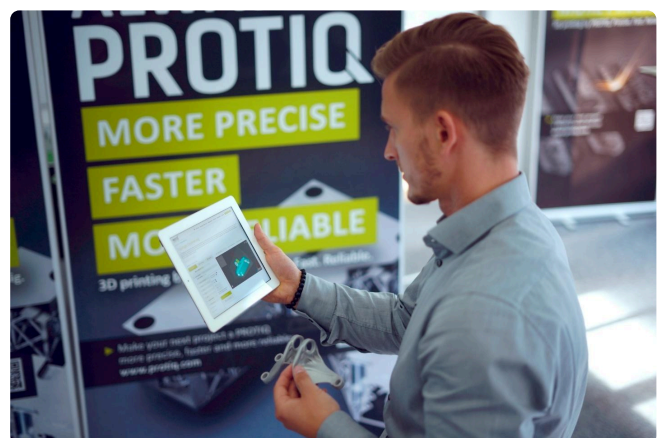
process, an order can be placed from the shopping cart within a few seconds after selecting the desired shipping and payment method.

Another feature that simplifies internal processes on the customer side is a role and permission system integrated into the platform. Customers can save and share the configured shopping carts as a project. For example, a purchase requisition can thus be assigned to operational purchasing, shortening communication and official channels.

Another special feature of the ProtIQ Marketplace worth mentioning is the so-called Tiny Tools, which offer customers added value at no extra cost. They include a large number of configurators for different applications. These enable users to generate their own models based on specific requirements without needing any knowledge of CAD or design engineering.

Thanks to the numerous parameters, users can thus realize individual design options as part of the configuration.

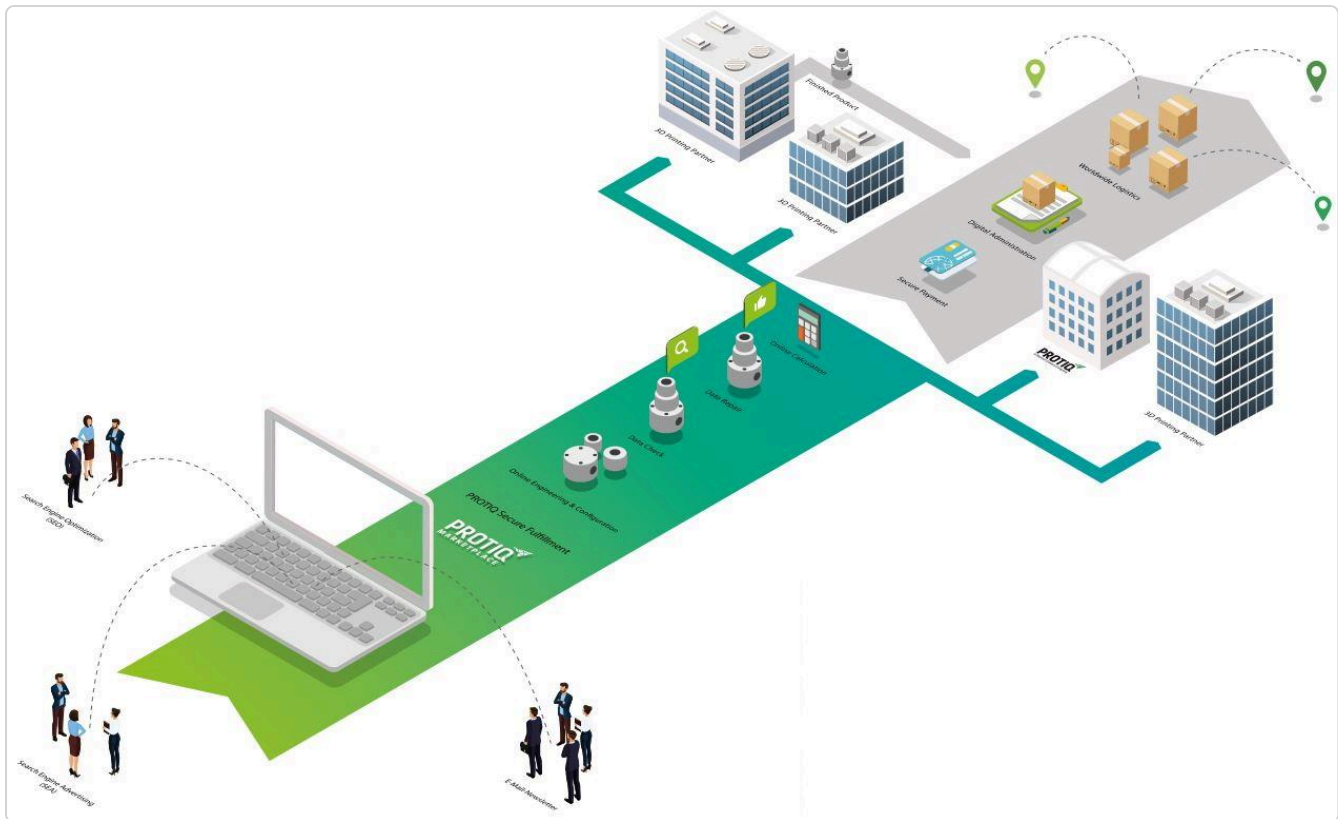
A plausibility check ensures that every configuration can actually be manufactured.



▼ With Tiny Tools, users of the ProtIQ Marketplace receive intuitive and free assistance to make even better use of the advantages of additive manufacturing

Better positioning in a competitive environment

Transparency proves to be an essential aspect of the ProtIQ Marketplace. On this basis, customers can make a deliberate decision as to which provider a (partial) order should be placed with. Furthermore, customers are meant to participate closely in the manufacturing process. The end-to-end automation of the ProtIQ Marketplace at the digital level makes this possible. Customers therefore know at all times exactly which process step their order is currently in.



▼ All players on the ProtIQ Marketplace benefit from a wide range of options and advantages

For the marketplace providers, transparency provides a basis for appearing under their own name and logo and for benefiting from the visibility of the platform. In this way, they expand their own business areas as a basis for expansion. Due to the steady growth of the entire industry, the ever wider range of manufacturers means that it is becoming considerably more difficult, especially for small and medium-sized 3D printing service providers, to position themselves on the market. It is therefore essential to recognize and tap the potential of online trading.

Diverse online marketing activities

E-commerce has developed into a relevant sales channel that also offers indispensable advantages to industrial service providers, for example by eliminating location disadvantages thanks to worldwide availability and independence from opening hours. As partners of the ProtIQ Marketplace, providers make use of all the advantages of e-commerce without having to worry about risks or possible disadvantages. Through their own secure merchant area, they also have access to an infrastructure that has been implemented on the basis of many years of experience with industrial customers.

Providers particularly benefit from the centrally managed online marketing activities, which generate valuable leads and further increase visibility through newsletters, targeted Google Ads campaigns, and search-engine-optimized content.

Since the go-live of the ProtIQ platform in December 2016 and its further development into the ProtIQ Marketplace in November 2017, new providers, manufacturing processes, and materials have been added continuously. Customers consequently benefit from the ever-growing range of services. On the other hand, providers also have the opportunity to stand out from their competitors and create unique selling points through innovative materials or technologies.

High quality requirements for providers

The quality of the services offered on the ProtIQ Marketplace proves to be one of the most important factors and therefore forms the basis for the successful onboarding of potential marketplace participants.

Essential prerequisites for participating in the marketplace are therefore a reliable quality assurance concept



▼ Providers are required to deliver the highest component quality and reliability for a successful partnership

and the submission of relevant certifications, for example in accordance with ISO 9001.

The successful activation of a new provider on the ProtIQ Marketplace therefore always requires a personal qualification process so that, in addition to high quality and reliability, a basis of trust can be established.

Further information:

www.protiq.com

Fast production of realistic models

Rapid prototyping encompasses a large number of manufacturing processes that enable components to be manufactured directly on the basis of design data. In addition to additive manufacturing technologies, which are characterized by layer-by-layer building, these also include subtractive production processes such as milling or turning.

In recent years, the term rapid prototyping has increasingly been used as a synonym for 3D printing processes, as these are particularly well suited to producing realistic models.

In the early development phase, functional components and small series can be manufactured quickly and cost-effectively. Considerable added value comes from visualizing the state of development using physical models, the option of functional tests under real conditions, and checking the geometric requirements in the field of application. In this way, test phases, correction loops, and the time to market can be shortened significantly.

