

Online marketplace in the 3D printing environment

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 been established in the private sector for many years with platforms such as Amazon or Zalando is increasingly gaining a foothold in industry: online marketplaces. In the 3D printing environment, Protiq provides such a solution that opens up a wide range of advantages for both customers and suppliers.



„Precise. Fast. Reliability“ - this is the value proposition that the Protiq Marketplace with its 26 providers gives its customers

The additive manufacturing industry is enjoying strong growth. The increasing demand for components from 3D printers and the great interest shown by all industrial sectors offer a wide range of opportunities for both suppliers and customers. In line with the guiding principle "Precise. Fast. Reliable." the ProtIQ Marketplace, which now comprises 26 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 provide customers with the greatest possible transparency and to increase the visibility of providers.

Immediate comparison of different offers

It is possible to upload component data directly on the start page in order to configure it in the subsequent process. The ProtIQ Marketplace for additive manufacturing gives customers the option of placing their order for an individual 3D component intuitively and quickly, without having to go through a lengthy process to obtain quotes. Customers can upload a data set of the desired component on the ProtIQ Marketplace homepage.



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The upload supports all common 3D data formats. An algorithm then checks the data set for general buildability and geometric dimensions. If a model has errors - such as open contours - the necessary repairs are made. After this step, customers receive direct visual feedback on the component. In addition to the three-dimensional view, they have the option of scaling the model or downloading the repaired file free of charge.

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

Simple generation of your own models

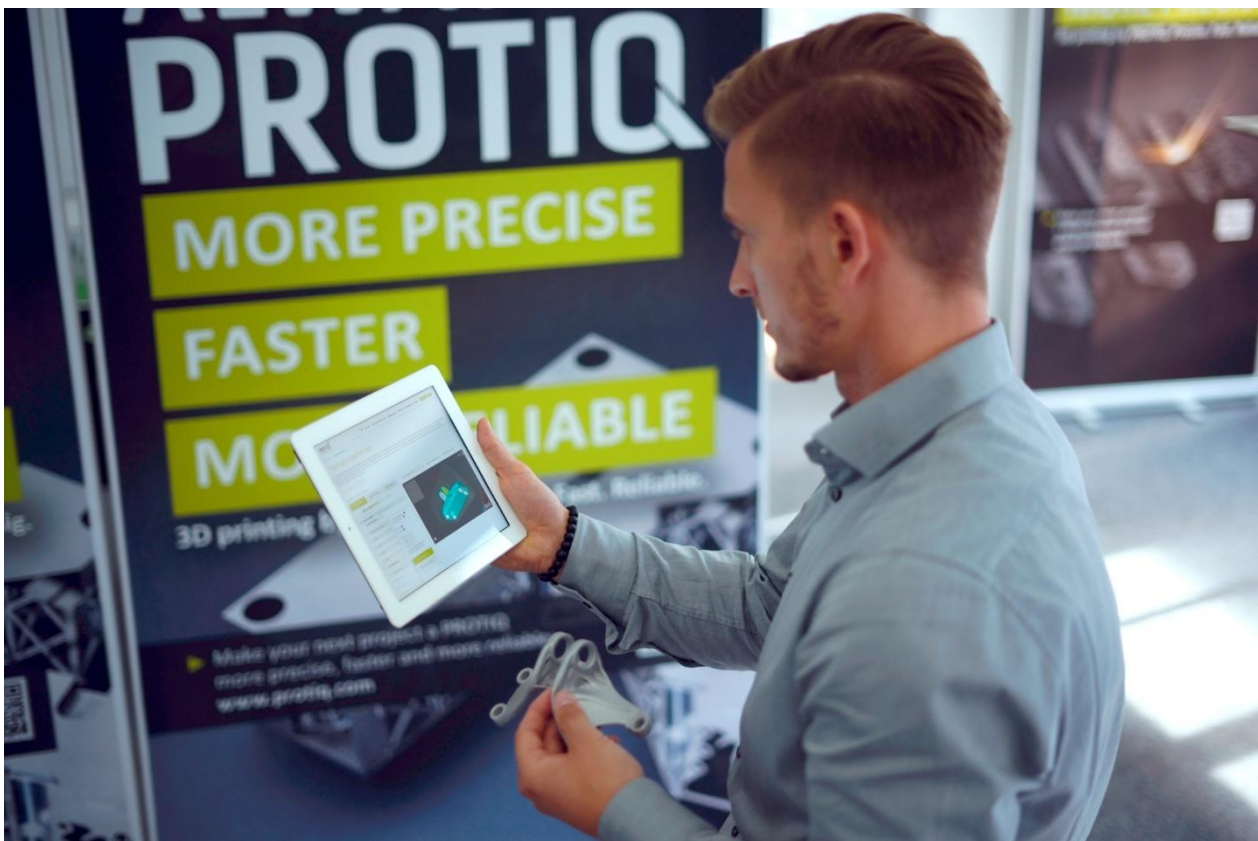
It is not necessary to create a private or business customer account to use the functionalities described. This simplifies and shortens the time-consuming online research on the part of the customer, which is associated with the conventional process of requesting quotations. The selection of a suitable provider for project implementation 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 also save an official quotation for the configuration they have made. In the final step of the ordering 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 for the customer is a role rights system integrated into the platform. The customer can save and share the configured shopping baskets as a project.

For example, a purchase requisition can be assigned to operational purchasing, which shortens communication and service channels.

Another special feature of the Protiq Marketplace is the so-called Tiny Tools, which offer customers added value at no extra cost. These include a variety of configurators for different applications. These enable users to generate their own models based on specific requirements without the need for CAD or design expertise.



Tiny Tools provides Protiq Marketplace users with intuitive and free assistance to better address the benefits of additive manufacturing

Due to the numerous parameters, he can realize individual design options within the scope of the configuration.

A plausibility check ensures that every configuration can be produced.

Better positioning in the competitive environment

Transparency is a key aspect of the Protiq Marketplace. On this basis, customers can consciously decide with which provider a (partial) order should be placed. In addition, customers should be able to participate closely in the production process.

The end-to-end automation of the Protiq Marketplace on the digital level makes this possible. The customer therefore knows at all times exactly which process step their order is currently in.

For the providers of the marketplace, transparency provides a basis for appearing with their own name and logo and benefiting from the visibility of the platform. In this way, they expand their own business areas as a basis for expansion. Due to the constant growth of the entire industry, the increasingly comprehensive range of manufacturers is making it much more difficult for small and medium-sized 3D printing service providers in particular to position themselves on the market. It is therefore essential to recognize and leverage the potential of online trade.

Diverse online marketing activities

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

Providers benefit in particular from centrally managed online marketing activities, which generate valuable leads and further increase visibility by sending out newsletters, targeted AdWords campaigns and search engine-optimized content.

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 successful onboarding of potential marketplace participants.

An essential prerequisite for participation in the marketplace is therefore a reliable quality assurance concept and the presentation 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 a basis of trust can be established in addition to high quality and reliability.



Suppliers are required to provide the highest component quality and reliability for a successful partnership

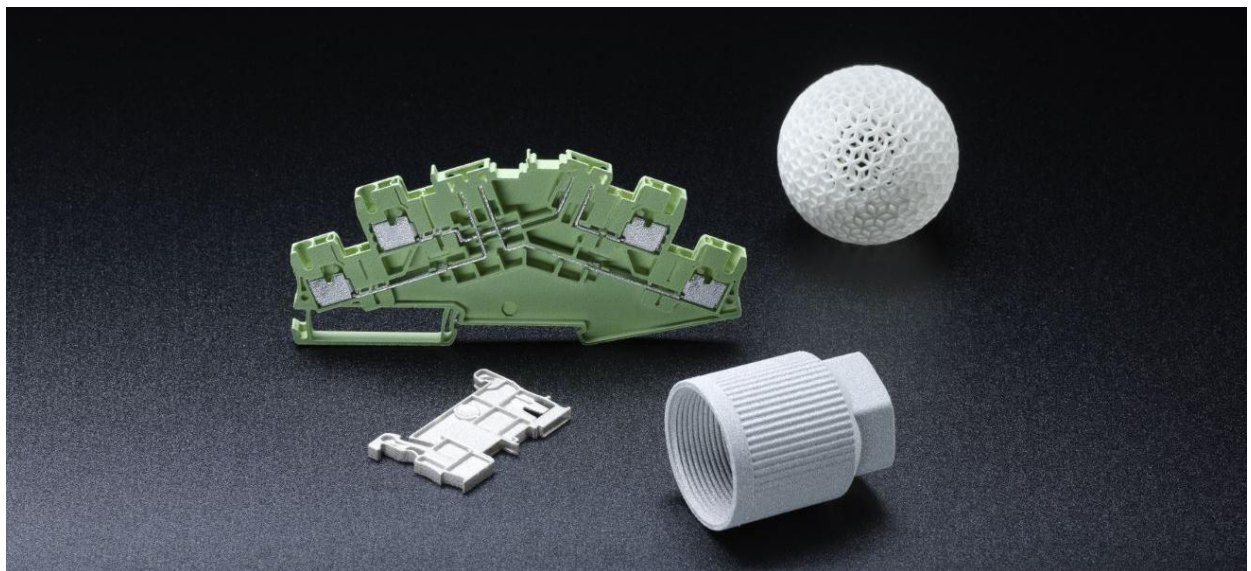
Further information:

www.protiq.com

Fast production of realistic models

Rapid prototyping includes a variety of master forming processes that enable the direct production of components based on design data. In addition to additive manufacturing technologies, which are characterized by a layered structure, these also include ablative 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 suitable for the production of realistic models.



Functional components and small batches can be produced quickly and economically in the early development phase. The visualization of the development status using physical models, the option of functional tests under real conditions and the control of geometric requirements in the application area offer great added value. This significantly shortens test phases, correction loops and the time to market maturity.