



6 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR TEAM WHEN EVALUATING CAD TOOLS

Discussion drivers for engineering managers and their teams



Choosing a CAD tool is a strategic decision that affects your entire engineering team's productivity, collaboration, and long-term innovation. These six questions help engineering managers evaluate potential solutions, balance team needs with business objectives, and ensure adoption drives measurable business impact.

1 WHAT KINDS OF DESIGN WORK DO WE DO, AND WHERE DOES OUR CURRENT OR EXPECTED WORKFLOW BREAK DOWN?

Ask engineers to walk through a recent or typical design from concept to release. Identify where they lose time, use workarounds, find their creativity hindered, or rely on tools outside CAD. This will clarify the true functional needs — from core modeling and assemblies to specialized capabilities like surfacing, routing, ECAD-MCAD, sheet metal, composites, etc. — and help you distinguish must-haves from nice-to-haves. Try to anticipate where the future will take your design needs as well – explore the full potential of a CAD solution.

2 HOW WELL WILL OUR CAD SYSTEM CONNECT DESIGN TO ANALYSIS, MANUFACTURING, AND RELEASE?

Rather than talking abstractly about “integration,” map the real flow of data through simulation, CAM, and production. Ask:

- Where do file conversions or data loss occur now?
- Where is non-engineering work eating into your day?
- Where do separate work environments collide, and do they require separate training and maintenance?
- How could tighter connections shorten design-manufacture cycles?

This conversation exposes hidden inefficiencies and clarifies where interoperability delivers real business value. CAD solution providers offer very different levels of downstream integration – find the one that makes a difference to your team's workday and competitive advantage.



3 HOW DO WE WANT TO MANAGE AND SHARE OUR PRODUCT DESIGN DATA?

Move beyond “where files live” to “how collaboration actually happens.” Ask:

- Where do we lose time chasing files or reconciling changes?
- What would “seamless collaboration” look like for us?
- What level of cloud access feels safe and productive?
- How much administration can we let our solution provider manage?
- How comfortable are we with integrating suppliers and customers into our systems?



This helps align IT, engineering, and management on the right balance of control, flexibility, and security. Fully explore cloud, on-premise, *and* hybrid options – some CAD providers offer more options than others.

4 WHAT KIND OF LEARNING AND SUPPORT HELPS YOU BECOME PRODUCTIVE QUICKLY?

Ask how team members prefer to learn — online & self-guided, in-person training, peer mentoring, hands-on discovery, or other vendor resources.

- What frustrated you about past rollouts?
- How can onboarding feel smoother this time?
- How do you plan to grow and solve challenges that arise?

You'll gather actionable input for designing an adoption plan that reduces downtime and resistance and builds confidence. The CAD solution provider, be it the developer or a reseller, can play a very active and valuable role in your success if you demand it.



5 HOW DO COST AND ACCESS AFFECT HOW WE ACTUALLY WORK ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS?

Even if the team doesn't control the budget, they feel the impact.

- Do shared or limited licenses slow anyone down?
- Are we holding back on features because of add-on costs?
- What compromises are we making today to stay within constraints?
- Waiting and rework is costly, so what additional spend can we make a strong ROI case for?
- In the past, have we experienced unexpected costs such as late integrations, vendor switches, and expensive supplementary tools? How can we avoid them?

Permanent licenses are still a thing with some CAD tools – do the math vs. the yearly spend, and don't forget that that yearly spend will increase over time. A total cost of ownership comparison between solutions may reveal a sum that can either be saved or invested in efficiency gains. This discussion connects financial realities to productivity realities.

6 HOW CAN THE CAD SYSTEM HELP US LEARN, GROW, AND ATTRACT GREAT ENGINEERS?

Ask about training, skill development, and tool familiarity.

- How steep a learning curve can we realistically support?
- How can our CAD choice make work more rewarding and creative?
- How have past tools held back our development as designers and engineers?
- Which CAD tools or ecosystems are most familiar to the talent we want to hire?
- What tools or ecosystems would make us more attractive to future hires?

Your CAD choice is also about culture. Tools that are intuitive, widely adopted, and rewarding to master improve morale, speed onboarding, and make recruitment easier. Investing in a platform that supports continuous learning builds long-term adaptability as technology evolves.

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