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# PDM software or PLM software: what's the difference?

The terms *product data management* (PDM) and *product lifecycle management* (PLM) are often used interchangeably, and the best PLM software has evolved directly from earlier PDM software designs. (In fact, we developed our first PDM software back in 1993.)

So, what's the difference between PDM software and PLM software?

## PDM software features

Although a few so-called PDM software solutions remain little more than CAD file managers, most PDM software includes these essential product data management functions:

- design documentation identification and revision control
- electronic data library for CAD files
- physical part attribute records
- supplier source records
- bill of materials management
- engineering change control with workflow

So, maybe PDM software is the same as PLM software...

## PDM software: It's almost like PLM software

Both PDM software and PLM software are designed to maintain a complete product evolution. PDM software and PLM software centralize and control the "who, what, when, why, how, at what cost" history of product data, while ERP or CAD systems narrowly focus on the "right here and right now" view.

PDM, as well as PLM, coordinates design intent and provides an orderly flow of approved data. PDM/PLM ensures that only the correct parts are ordered, produced and assembled according to valid & approved documentation. PDM/PLM is the central repository of the product definition: requirements; drawings; supplier datasheets; test results; assembly, test and inspection procedures; user documentation; and technical field support materials.

PDM and PLM systems prevent costly errors related to unapproved part substitutions, out-of-date documentation, incorrect part numbers, and even many clerical errors in transferring final designs into production. They can also answer questions about what had previously been used, who made changes and why, and what alternatives were considered and rejected.

But, most PDM software also misses a few things...

## PDM software: It's a not quite PLM software

PDM software focuses primarily on engineering tasks, specifically the design release and change cycle, and doesn't offer a complete data view over the entire product life cycle.

PDM software is often acquired to manage purely technical design data. So, PDM software may be weak in accommodating non-technical documents (such as marketing requirements) and physical

item records (such as sales brochures) or post-sales documentation and spares inventory affecting product support, service, and disposal. PDMs don't include peripheral capabilities like materials identification for regulatory compliance or cost roll-ups for bill of materials analysis.

Because PDM software often assumes users are engineers, even simple capabilities can be too "techie". For example, item search in PDM software often requires an understanding of how item attributes are stored and indexed in the PDM database as well as Boolean logic syntax — certainly not a benefit to the average marketing manager or purchasing agent.

PDM software doesn't provide PLM's comprehensive view of the information that should be managed as part of your product's life cycle. And, PDM data is typically locked in a user interface that non-technical users may find too complex for their own product data management needs.

## The best PDM software is more - it's PDXpert PLM

There is no known way to handle the complex interrelationship between parts without access to a well designed Product Data Management system. A PLM system is even more useful!

*Simon Harrison, Engineer, RA Warren Equipment Ltd.*

While PDXpert PLM software provides product data management system features, its capabilities exceed even the best PDM software. Unlike PDM software, PDXpert PLM software supports the complete product life cycle with:

- **Flexible document & part types** that permit unique naming and identification outside the engineering department
- **Superior Google-like free-form text search** that allows non-technical users easy access to their own documents and parts
- **Virtually unlimited change forms and change workflows** that can be uniquely tailored to a specific department's needs, so that upstream (marketing) and downstream (customer support, field service) organizations can manage their part of the product life cycle using their own change processes.
- **Materials identification and reporting** for simple and cost-effective RoHS/WEEE/ELV regulatory compliance in product maintenance and repair, hazardous material handling and product disposal.
- **Document and part dispositioning** to clearly communicate how items throughout the supply and distribution chains will be affected by pending changes.

PDXpert PLM software eclipses older PDM software by ensuring that your entire product data history, from product definition to product retirement, is captured and maintained by all groups within your organization.

## Discover the better PDM software alternative: PDXpert PLM

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