



A PENTON PUBLICATION
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User review

Edited by Paul Dvorak

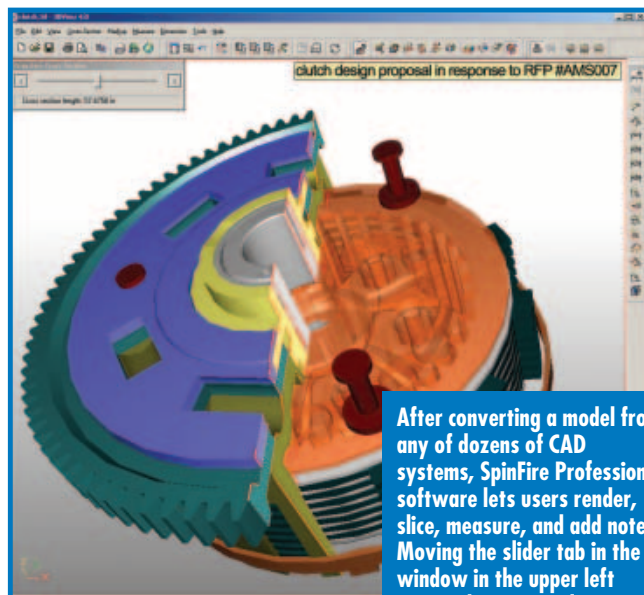
Take measurements, add notes, see inside models with viewer

Handling over 200 automotive jobs, product-design projects, moldmaking, and related tasks each year means my firm spends a lot of time translating different CAD file formats. SpinFire Professional software helps avoid translation troubles in these tasks by letting us view CAD designs with clients, but without translations from the native system. The program lets users view, measure, markup, and share designs almost regardless of the original CAD file format. This is crucial because designers send manufacturers models and drawings from dozens of CAD systems such as Catia, UG, I-DEAS, Pro/E, and IGES. SpinFire Professional software lets us see every model. A more-expensive solution would be to spend many thousands to purchase a CAD system for each format just to see the models.

The viewing software works like Adobe Acrobat. After receiving a design, it's converted into a visualization format, a .3D file. We can then view and share .3D files using the developer's free viewer. In fact, .3D files are more powerful than .pdf files because models can be rotated, zoomed, cross sectioned, and dimensioned.

The software also allows taking key measurements when estimating or preparing for design reviews. The viewing software lets us check designs for geometric properties such as volume, distance, angles, diameter, and surface area. With a spreadsheet and a few mouse-clicks, for example, users quickly determine how much material designs will need, their center of gravity, volume, and total box size.

Another round of benefits comes when preparing for design reviews. The software lets team members analyze designs for surface quality, possible weaknesses, inconsistencies, and flaws. The software makes it easy to insert and save electronic "post-it" notes to any design. For example, our engineers often take



After converting a model from any of dozens of CAD systems, SpinFire Professional software lets users render, slice, measure, and add notes. Moving the slider tab in the window in the upper left moves the cutting plane through the top half of the clutch.

the viewing program to design reviews. Engineers and clients then gather around a laptop and add comments, questions, and clarifications. These are saved and tracked, so our team can adjust the final design and check with appropriate team members to make sure requirements are met.

New features in Version 4.1 include one-click e-mail that makes communicating with customers easier the ever. When questions crop up, we send an electronic, marked up version of a design. A viewer is sent so anyone can see comments. The .3D files are highly compressed so they do not eat up bandwidth the way native CAD files would.

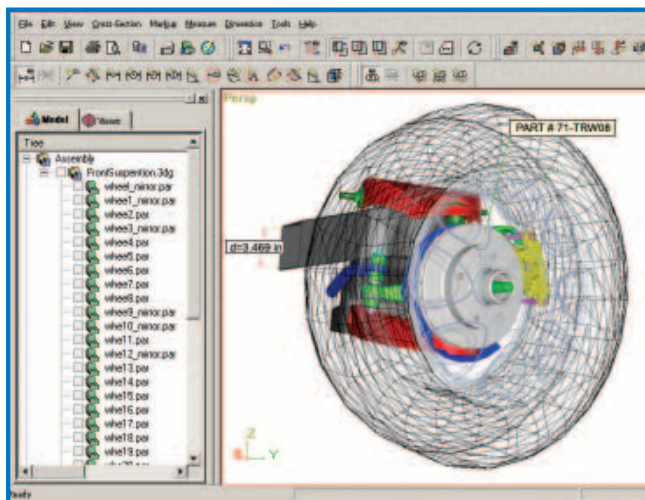
The viewing software also adds a level of security, making it less worrisome sharing designs. Original native files are protected because they are converted to the .3D format, which cannot be modified or imported into any CAD system.

What's more, the software works fast. Designs load quickly and can be accurately rendered to make them more eye catching. The user interface follows Microsoft Windows conventions, making it intuitive for everyone.

About the only complaint is that viewing performs slowly on older machines. All functions work, but performance can be sluggish. As models approach 30 Mbytes, it takes a while for SpinFire Professional to load them. In these cases, installing relatively inexpensive RAM speeds things up.

SpinFire Professional comes from **Actify**, One Kearny St., 3rd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94108, (415) 421-1840, www.actify.com — Sean Halpin

Circle 421



A user at an automotive supplier takes measurements off a front suspension. The model tree to the left shows that each component of the large assembly has been converted and assigned a name.

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