

Engineering Answers: Fail Faster

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In the world of engineering, if you haven't heard about 3D printing, you've been living under a rock; however, utilizing the prototyping tool is a different story. 3D printing technology, or additive manufacturing, has been around for some time now (FDM dates back to the early 90s), but it has only recently begun to reach the masses outside of engineering. Much of that exposure, and the growing impact of 3D printing in the mainstream, can be credited to makers, or physical hackers, and the MakerBot.

As the market gap between hobbyist makers and professional engineers continues to close, desktop 3D printing is emerging as the next golden nugget in prototyping and small-scale manufacturing. MakerBot has been at the cusp of this revolution, as CEO, Bre Pettis explains, "when we started, we wanted a 3D printer, but at the time they were way too expensive [for the] average person, so we had to make one. When it worked, we started a company so everybody could have one."

Open-Source to Money Maker

The original MakerBot was designed as an open-source 3D printer for makers to create their most imaginative creations. As the company, and 3D printing, grew in popularity, Bre Pettis adjusted their business plan. "We moved away from our purist point-of-view, and now we are just mostly open-source," explains Pettis. Making money and open-source don't typically go hand-in-hand, but MakerBot has stayed true to their sharing mentality. "We're committed to sharing, and that sharing makes a better world. We share as much as we can, while still being able to have a business, so we can keep going."

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