3D Digital Transformation in Retail: Transitioning to What’s Next

On 21st June 2017, the 3D.RC joined IEEE and Intel to co-host a highly interactive, hands-on workshop focused on 3D digital transformation.

The day’s activities – co-hosted by IEEE, Intel and 3D.RC – took participants through various team-based exercises to learn about and implement ways to evaluate the spectrum of opportunities and challenges an organization faces as they move through their digital transformation journey.

Companies representing a range of retailers, wholesale brands, product categories, and functions participated. As a result, the conversations were rich and diverse. For most of the day, the attendees were split into smaller groups allowing for the sharing of many individual experiences and ideas; and there were three themes that consistently dominated every conversation:

The importance of people

Though the exercise focused on driving results using 3D and related technologies, it was almost impossible to get away from talking about the organization. All groups agreed that a successful 3D program requires executive sponsorship, and in some cases, may require a top down edict if the organization is to embrace the program.

Cited several times was the need for a solid change management program supported by regular communication. Many felt that the new technology could be threatening to the organization – either because jobs are eliminated due to automation or because existing roles will require new skills and experience. Groups talked about the challenges of managing displaced employees, recruiting new talent, and training existing talent. Participants all agreed that managing the organizational change that will come with the shift to 3D is a critical success factor.

The need for collaboration

Leveraging 3D technology will drive significant benefits for companies, but more importantly, participants acknowledged that 3D technology could be the driver for broad collaboration both within and outside of organizations – which would ultimately drive even greater value. Groups discussed the importance of using 3D to improve collaboration with suppliers, and identified several success stories where functions outside of design and development use 3D assets both to reduce costs and increase speed to market.

Participants also talked about opportunities to use the technology to support shared resources, across functions within a company or even with 3rd party partners. Open communication across the ecosystem is a necessity for collaboration, but if companies are open to it, 3D can truly transform the way work is done today.

Technology requirements

Although 3D technology has significantly improved from where it was only a few years ago, participants spent a great deal of time talking about the challenges companies continue to face.

First, to support broad collaboration within organizations and across the ecosystem, companies will need end-to-end integration of the various technology applications used throughout the value chain. Common technology standards (e.g. for file formats) are a prerequisite for this.

Second, shared resources such as shared digital libraries for materials, trims, and colors would also help to accelerate success.

And finally, participants all agreed that having technology partners who are willing to align their product roadmaps to the priorities of their customers will be critical. Working together to identify shared priorities for the technology vendors is critical to enable rapid progress.

About the 3D.RC

The 3D Retail Coalition (3D.RC) is a collaborative group of global retailers and brands, working together to advance 3D technology for the apparel, accessories and footwear designers, retailers, manufacturers and supply chains.

Our mission is to provide direction, resources and networking opportunities to help members unlock and accelerate the potential value of 3D digital transformation, while maintaining positive impact within their organizations and the industry.

The 3D.RC organization brings together one voice for collective influence. The group is open to any retailer/brand currently using (or planning to use) 3D technology.