

THE ULTIMATE SOLIDWORKS TOP 10 LIST

The top 10 SOLIDWORKS features engineers found most useful over the years, plus standout programs that consistently ranked high among users.

INTRODUCTION

TOP TEN SOLIDWORKS FEATURES OR ENHANCEMENTS OVER THE LAST 30 YEARS

- 1) Multibody Modeling
- 2) Configurations
- 3) Mouse Gestures
- 4) FeatureManager
- 5) Hole Wizard
- 6) Interference Detection
- 7) Breadcrumbs
- 8) RealView Graphics
- 9) Cloud Services
- 10) SOLIDWORKS 1995

HONORABLE MENTIONS

SOLIDWORKS User Group Network (SWUGN)

SOLIDWORKS Education Edition

SOLIDWORKS Champions

SOLIDWORKS for Makers

SOLIDWORKS for Startups

SOLIDWORKS Certification

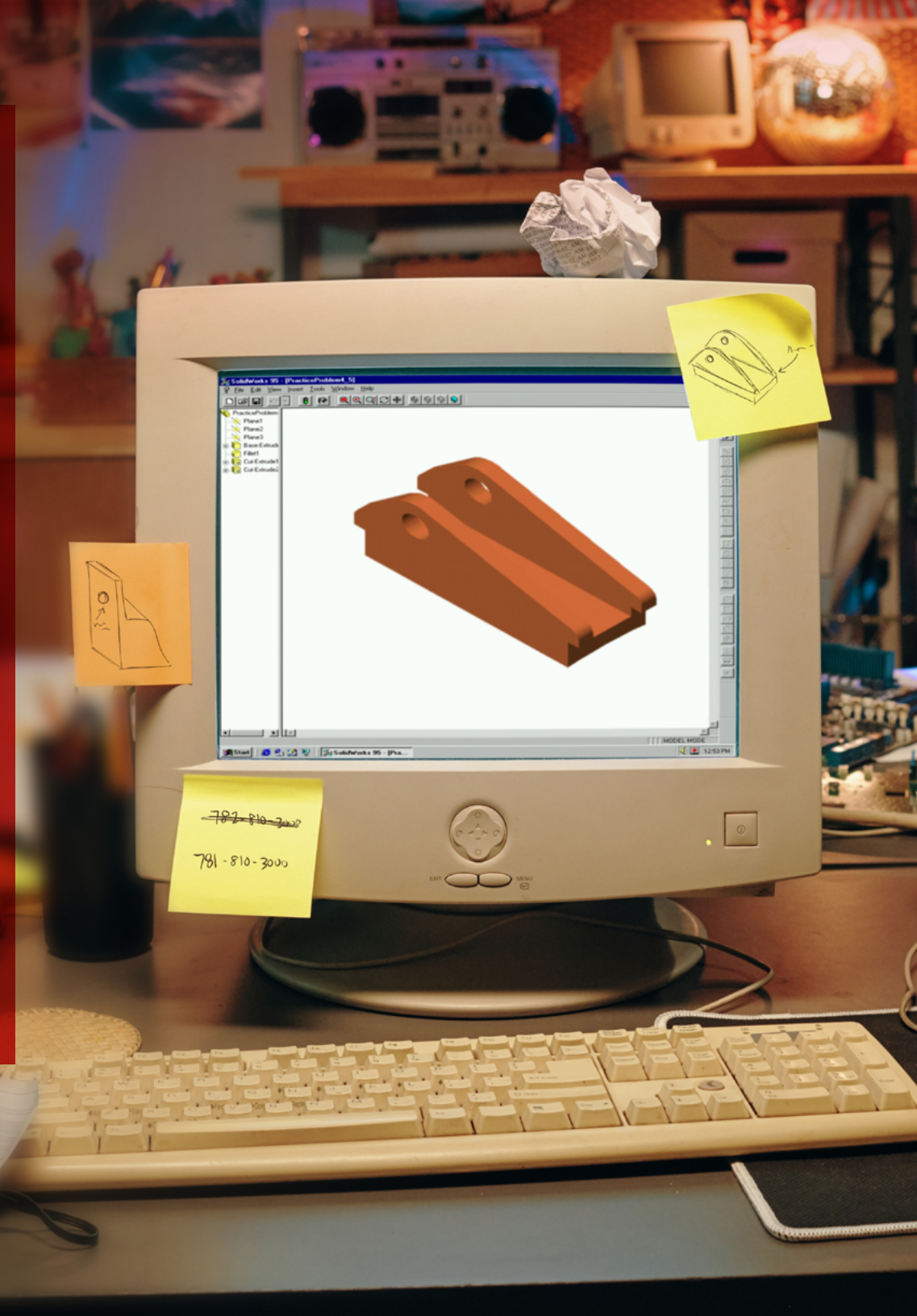
THE FUTURE OF PRODUCT INNOVATION

THE ULTIMATE SOLIDWORKS TOP 10 LIST

SOLIDWORKS is celebrating three decades of continuous software improvements that have enabled engineers and designers to work more efficiently while creating some of the world's most innovative products. We asked actual users, along with SOLIDWORKS R&D team members, to share which features have had the most memorable impact. Whether you started with the earliest Windows-native version in the mid-1990s or just recently began exploring SOLIDWORKS, this eBook will detail the top features and enhancements that have shaped the product.

When SOLIDWORKS launched in 1995, it democratized 3D CAD by making it affordable and easy to use on the popular Windows platform. This drastically shortened the software's learning curve, yet still provided powerful features to spur innovation. SOLIDWORKS has continued to evolve and support more advanced workflows across multidisciplinary design, cloud-based collaboration, simulation, manufacturing, and data management while staying true to its original focus: being accessible, affordable, and user-friendly.

Read on for the top 10 list of features and enhancements, plus several honorable mentions that reflect the broader SOLIDWORKS community experience.



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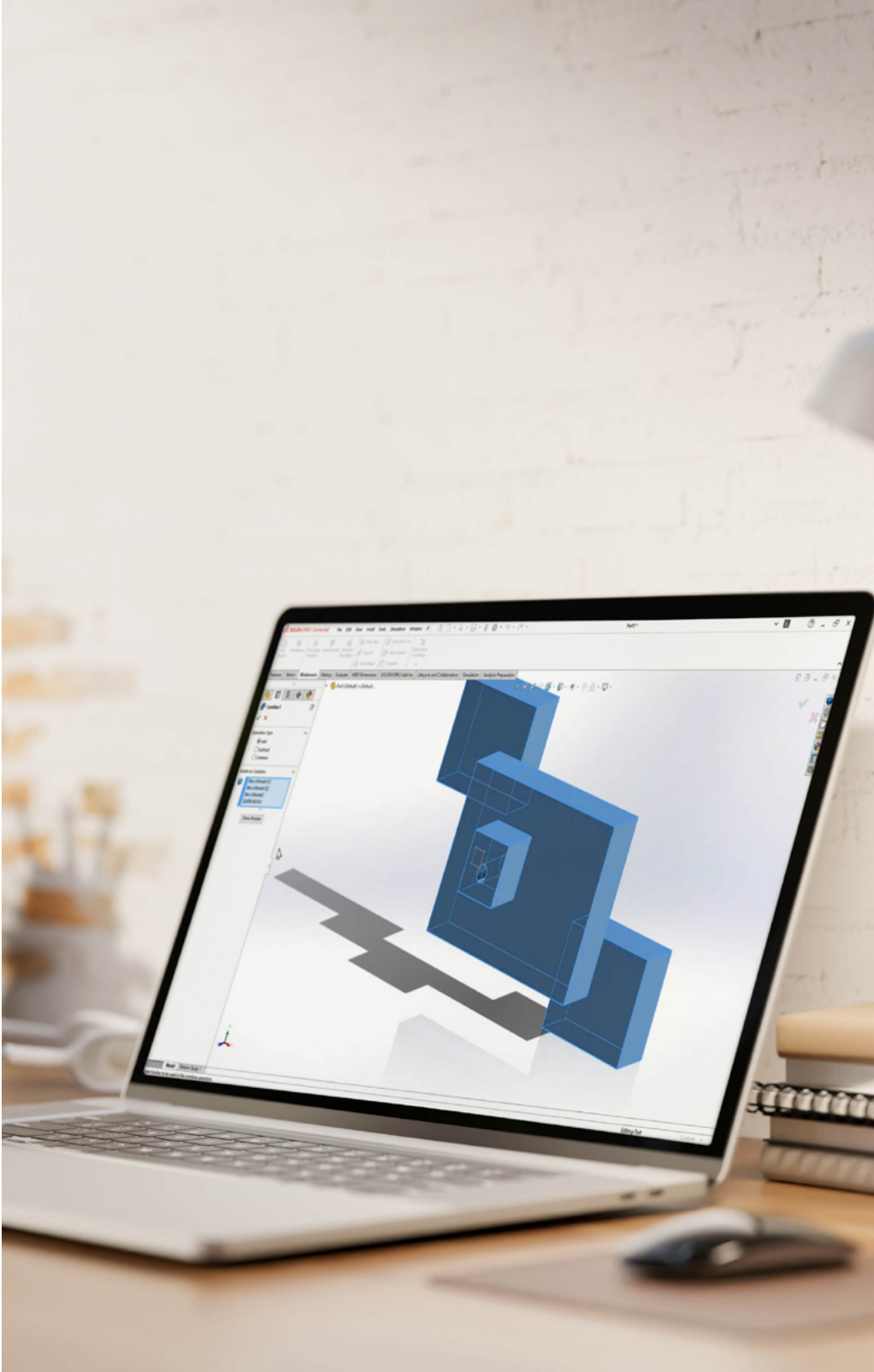
1) MULTIBODY MODELING

Multibody Modeling enables the creation and management of multiple solid bodies within a single part file in SOLIDWORKS instead of making separate parts in separate files and assembling them later. It's a powerful way to design complex, interconnected components without jumping back and forth between assemblies and parts.

What Makes It Stand Out?

- Faster Iteration and Concept Modeling
- Better Control of Interrelated Features
- Streamlined File Management

Multibody modeling replaced the one-body-per-part limit in earlier SOLIDWORKS versions, eliminating clumsy workarounds and enabling complex features like lofts between disjointed shapes. It unlocked powerful workflows in sheet metal and weldments that were so impactful that one user called Multibody Modeling **“probably the biggest core enhancement.”**



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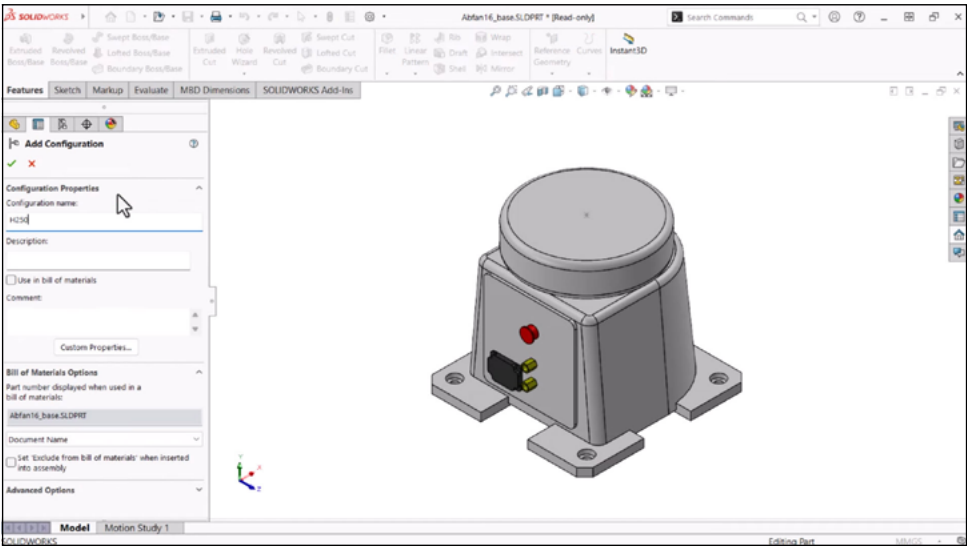
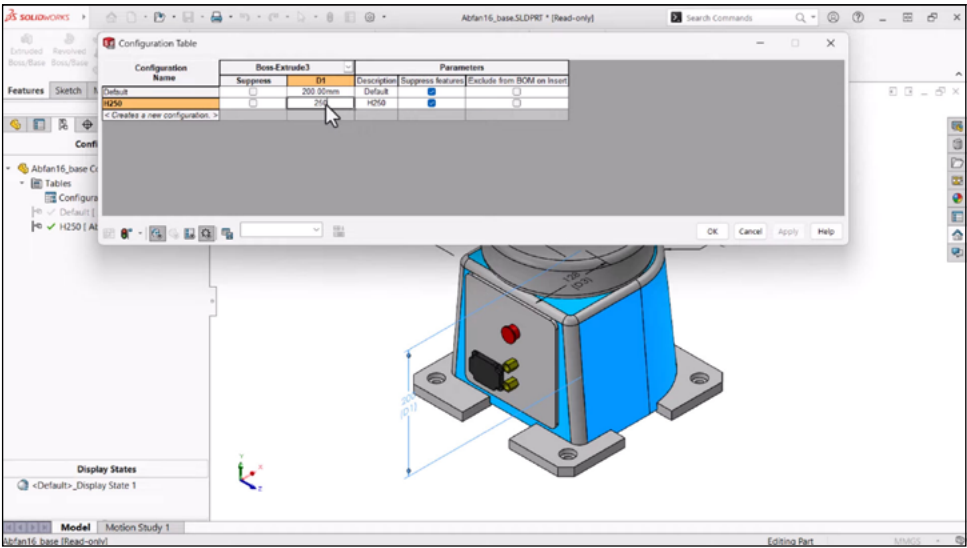
2) CONFIGURATIONS

Configurations enable the creation of multiple variations of a part or assembly within a single file in SOLIDWORKS, each with different dimensions, features, components, or properties. It's a way to manage design families without making separate files for each version.

What Makes It Stand Out?

- Fewer Files to Manage
- Fast Design Iteration
- Perfect for Product Families

Before data management systems were common, Configurations enabled engineers to manage design variants without creating separate files. They're still widely used for fast iteration and efficient modeling of product families, all within one file. As one user put it, ***"Configurations are a cornerstone of SOLIDWORKS."***



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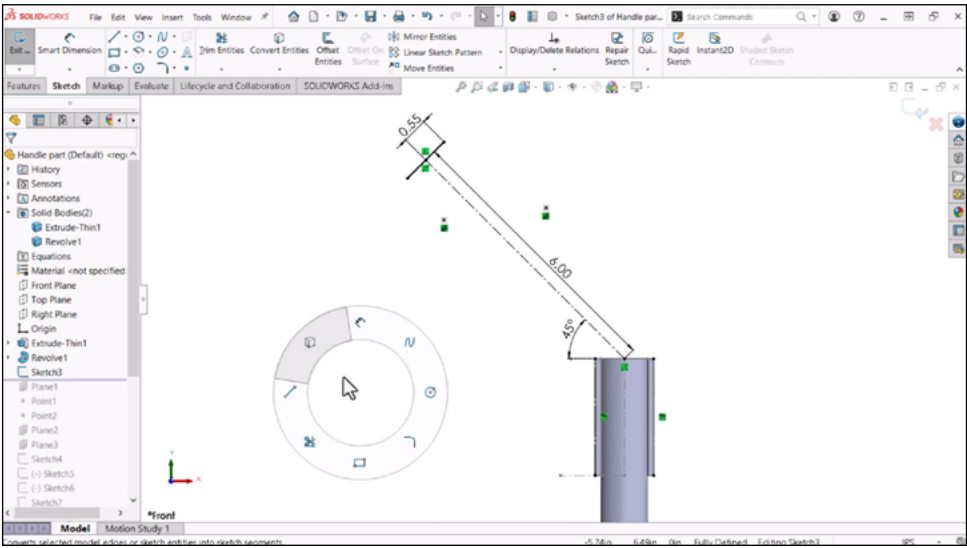
3) MOUSE GESTURES

Mouse Gestures provide a fast, gesture-based way to access commonly used commands in SOLIDWORKS with just a flick of the mouse. Users can instantly launch commands without moving to the ribbon or toolbar by holding down the right mouse button and dragging.

What Makes It Stand Out?

- Quick Access to Commands
- Customizable to Fit Your Workflow
- Reduces Mouse Travel and Clicks

Mouse Gestures streamline workflows by giving users fast, customizable access to common commands based on context, such as sketch, part, assembly, or drawing. The feature reduces mouse travel and clicks, keeping design work fluid. One user noted, ***“There's arguably no faster way to invoke a command in SOLIDWORKS.”***



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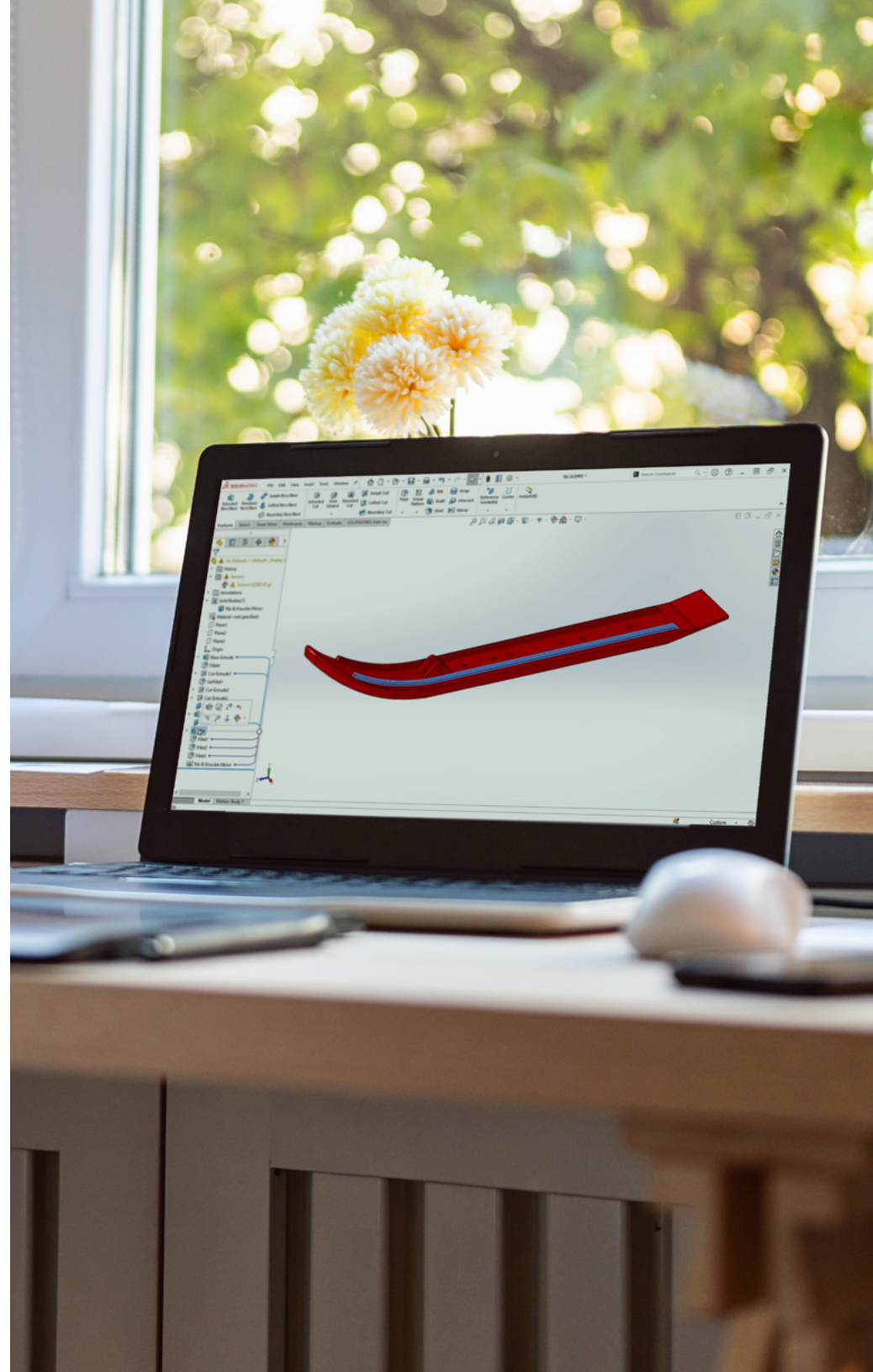
4) FEATUREMANAGER

FeatureManager is the main design tree used to view and organize features, sketches, mates, and other elements of a model in SOLIDWORKS. It offers a structured, hierarchical view that makes it easier to control and edit a part or assembly as its design evolves.

What Makes It Stand Out?

- *Simple Control of Design History*
- *Easy Access to Features and Sketches*
- *Drag-and-Drop Editing and Reordering*

FeatureManager has been part of SOLIDWORKS since day one. A user called it ***"a game-changer"*** for the intuitive, structured way it manages sketches, features, and mates. In 1995, it broke from cryptic UNIX interfaces by giving Windows users drag-and-drop control, making professional-grade 3D modeling feel familiar, visual, and far more accessible.



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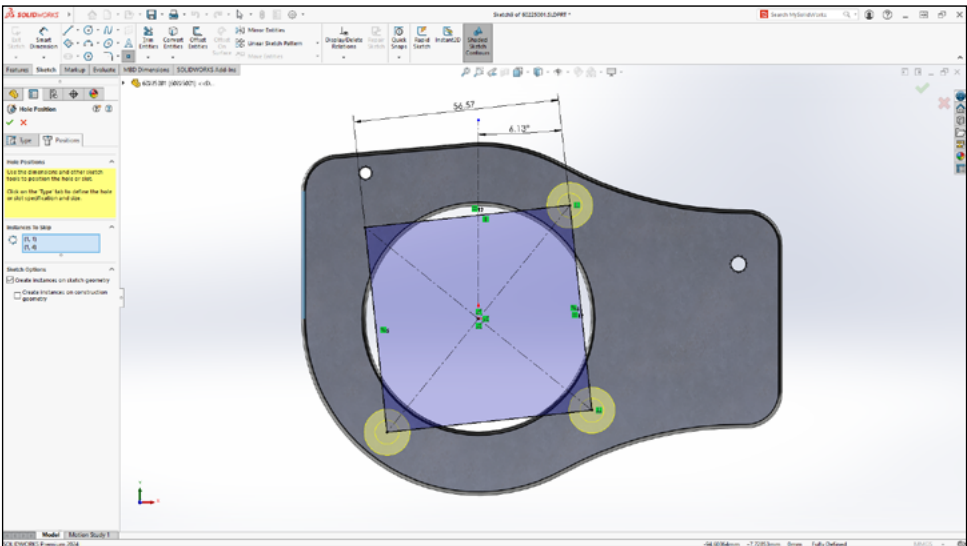
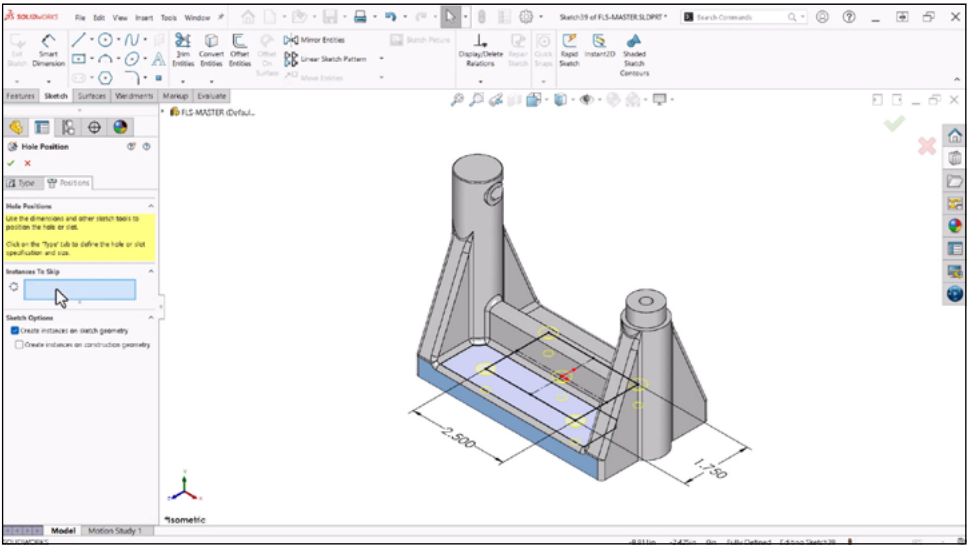
5) HOLE WIZARD

Hole Wizard automates the creation of standard hole types (such as counterbore, countersink, tapped, or clearance holes) in SOLIDWORKS based on industry standards. It ensures holes are both correctly sized and positioned.

What Makes It Stand Out?

- Standard-Compliant Holes
- Time-Saving Automation
- Easy to Modify and Reuse

Hole Wizard was developed to automate standard hole creation, eliminating the need to manually sketch and dimension each one. One user recalls, ***“You used to have to look up diameters and manually extrude. Now you just pick a fastener and go.”*** Hole Wizard saves time, reduces the incidence of errors, and improves flexibility.



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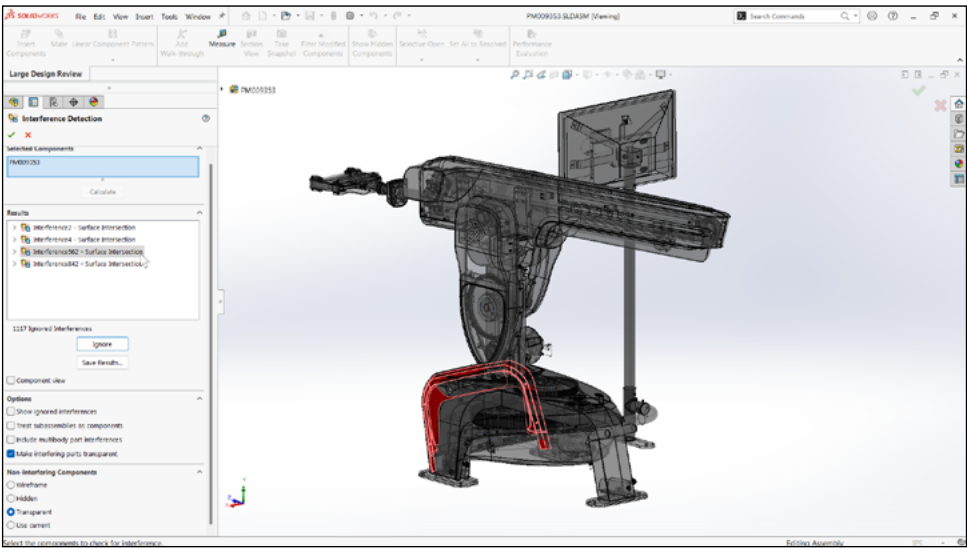
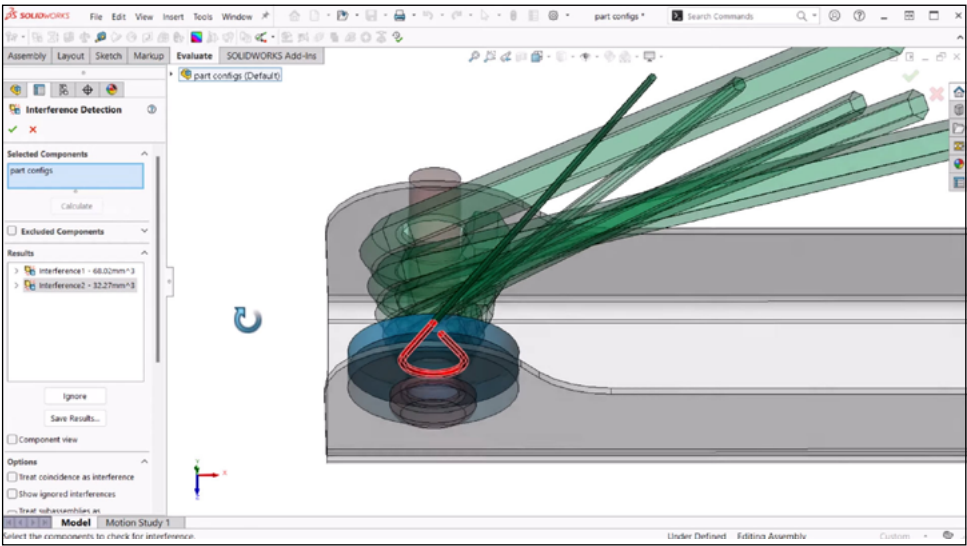
6) INTERFERENCE DETECTION

Interference Detection identifies where parts within an assembly interfere with one another. It flags overlapping geometry, enabling engineers to catch issues early, before prototyping or manufacturing.

What Makes It Stand Out?

- Finds Problems Before They Escalate
- Works on the Entire Assembly or Selected Parts
- Improves Fit, Form, and Function

Whether analyzing the full assembly or selected components, Interference Detection allows users to catch design flaws that might be expensive to fix downstream or jeopardize meeting delivery dates. **Any engineer who's faced late-stage interferences knows the value of spotting design flaws early in the design process.**



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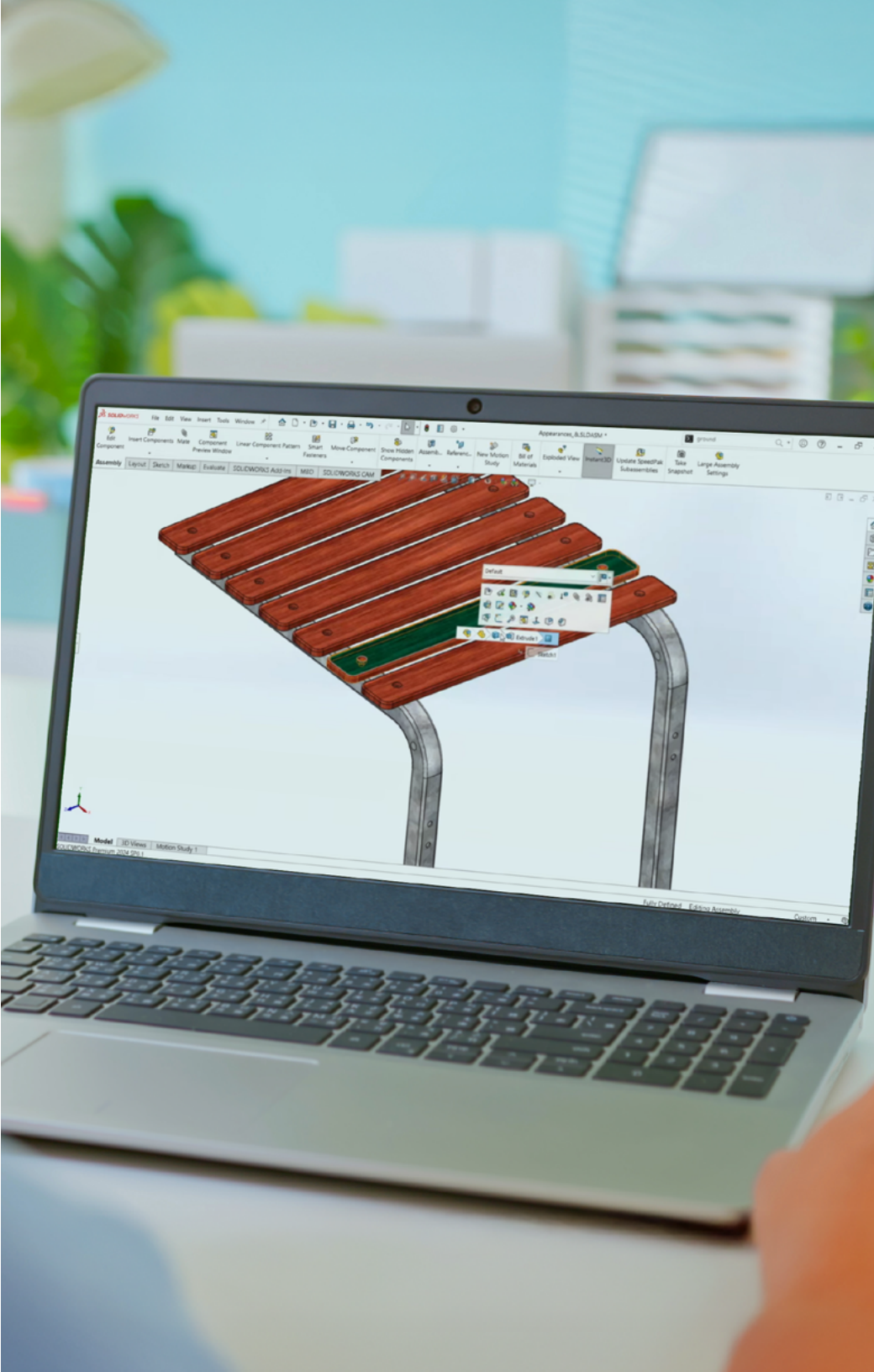
7) BREADCRUMBS

Breadcrumbs offer an on-screen navigation path in SOLIDWORKS that follows your selection, from face or edge to feature, body, and document. Breadcrumbs appear right next to the mouse cursor and eliminate the need to hunt through the FeatureManager.

What Makes It Stand Out?

- Reduces Mouse Travel
- Provides Contextual Navigation
- Speeds Up Feature Editing

Breadcrumbs were developed to reduce the need for constant navigation through the FeatureManager in SOLIDWORKS by showing a pop-up path of face, body, feature, part, and mate right near the cursor. It's especially helpful in larger assemblies. One SOLIDWORKS Champion says, ***"I evangelize Breadcrumbs. It saves a ton of time navigating models."***



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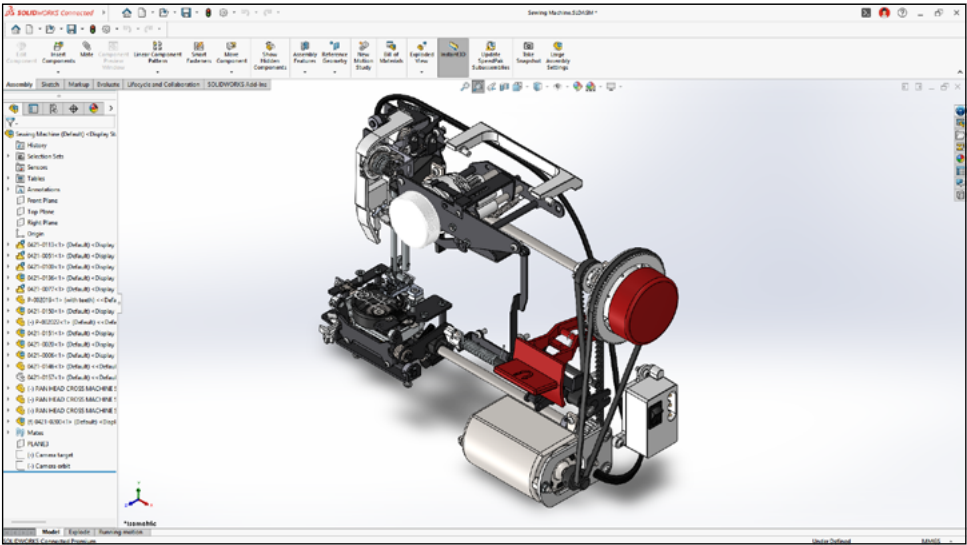
8) REALVIEW GRAPHICS

RealView Graphics provides real-time rendering of materials, reflections, shadows, and scene lighting directly in the modeling window in SOLIDWORKS, eliminating the need to render separately.

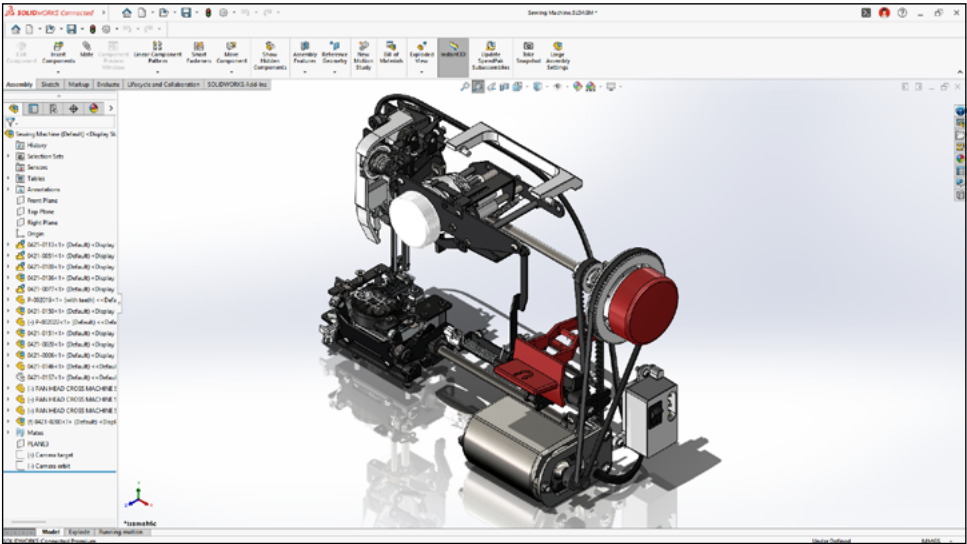
What Makes It Stand Out?

- Realistic Visual Feedback While Modeling
- Enhances Presentations and Client Reviews
- No Rendering Required

RealView Graphics brought real-time, semi-photorealistic visuals, such as materials, lighting, shadows, etc., directly into the modeling window. Though it's not quite full rendering, it gives users a fast, intuitive sense of how a model will look. **Users can skip rendering by using RealView Graphics screenshots for reviews, presentations, and documentation.**



RealView Disabled



RealView Enabled

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9) CLOUD SERVICES

Cloud Services enable users to store, access, and share SOLIDWORKS CAD files securely via the **3DEXPERIENCE** platform. It supports version control, design collaboration, and browser-based access to CAD data without leaving SOLIDWORKS.

What Makes It Stand Out?

- Built-In Data Management
- Access Files from Anywhere
- Seamless Collaboration with Teams

Cloud Services marks the third major shift in SOLIDWORKS history, after Windows support and embedded tools. Data is always available, up-to-date, and instantly shareable. Even smaller teams get collaboration and data management without all the IT complexity and extra costs. One user remarked, ***“It’s like a magic CAD-aware hard drive in the sky.”***



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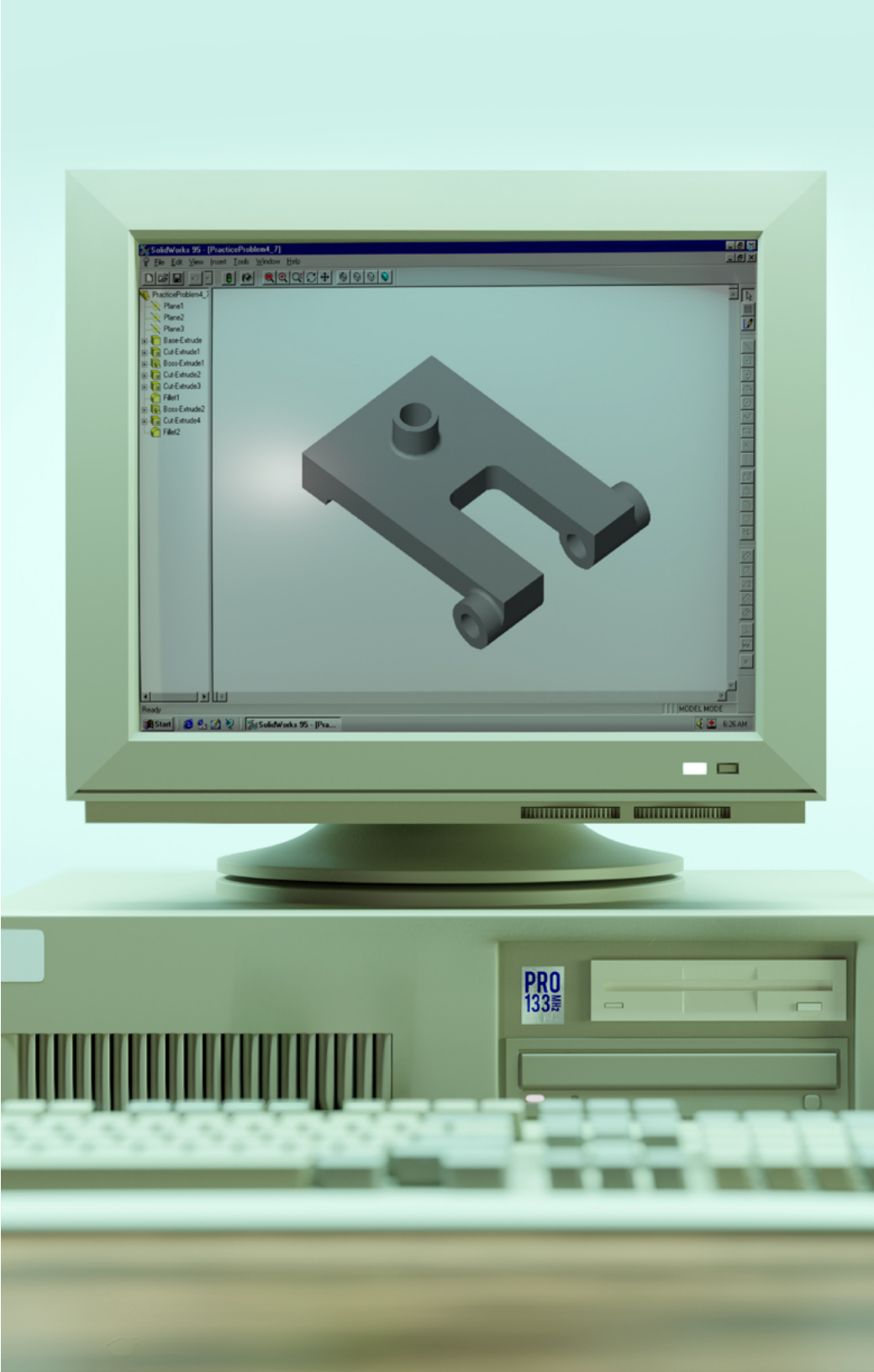
10) SOLIDWORKS 1995

SOLIDWORKS 1995 was the first professional-grade 3D CAD tool built natively for Windows. Back in the mid-90s, most professional-level 3D CAD software was difficult to learn and use, as was the UNIX operating system it ran on. That changed drastically in 1995. With SOLIDWORKS, engineers could work in a familiar environment, drastically cut training time, and be productive faster. SOLIDWORKS made 3D CAD accessible for an entire generation of designers and engineers who jumped in and started building innovative products.

What Made It Stand Out?

- Affordable**
Approximately \$4,000 vs \$18,000 for UNIX-based CAD software
- Accessible**
Familiar drag-and-drop Windows UI vs UNIX
- User-friendly**
Learning curve of days instead of months

Developing 3D CAD for the widely used and understood Windows-based platform democratized design. **3D CAD was now affordable, easy to use, and accessible in a way it had never been before.** After the initial release of SOLIDWORKS in late 1995, the rest is history



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A group of people are working on a blue car chassis in a workshop. A man in a black t-shirt is leaning over the car, and a woman in a blue top is standing next to him, looking at the car. Another man in a grey hoodie is also working on the car. In the background, there are other people and large windows.

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SOLIDWORKS USER GROUP NETWORK (SWUGN)

The SOLIDWORKS User Group Network (SWUGN) is a global community of local groups that brings users together to share knowledge, network with peers, and develop their skills. Meetings are free and open to all experience levels.

What Makes It Stand Out?

- Strong Sense of Community
- Peer-to-Peer Learning
- Access to Tips, Tricks, and Expert Advice

Back in 1997, SWUGN was started by users as a way for designers and engineers to connect, share, learn, and build relationships with other CAD aficionados. SWUGN and the SOLIDWORKS community of users have helped shape SOLIDWORKS and make it what it is today.



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SOLIDWORKS EDUCATION EDITION

The SOLIDWORKS Education Edition equips students, educators, and schools with the tools to teach and learn 3D design, simulation, and engineering principles. It includes curriculum, certification, and access to industry tools.

What Makes It Stand Out?

- *Prepares Students for Industry Careers*
- *Includes Curriculum and Teaching Resources*
- *Access to Certification Exams*

The Education Edition was designed to bring professional-grade design tools into high schools and universities with academic pricing and school-specific support. Tailored for teaching, it helps educators stay within budget while giving students hands-on experience with software used in industry. The goal is to enhance STEM learning with practical, real-world design skills.



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SOLIDWORKS CHAMPIONS

SOLIDWORKS Champions is a recognition program for top advocates, experts, and community leaders who go above and beyond to help others learn and grow within the SOLIDWORKS ecosystem.

What Makes It Stand Out?

- Celebrates Passionate Contributors
- Exclusive Access and Recognition
- Opportunities to Inspire and Lead

Building on the SWUGN spirit, the SOLIDWORKS Champions program was created to acknowledge and connect the most passionate users with each other and the internal SOLIDWORKS team. Champions are users who go out of their way to engage with SOLIDWORKS users of all levels and celebrate CAD, learning, and community.



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SOLIDWORKS FOR MAKERS

SOLIDWORKS for Makers offers hobbyists and DIYers affordable access to professional-grade design tools for personal projects, inventions, and artistic creations.

What Makes It Stand Out?

- Affordable Access to Professional CAD Tools
- Perfect for Personal and Creative Projects
- Connected to a Global Maker Community

Designers, engineers, and inventors are creative people. That creativity often spills into their homes and garages. SOLIDWORKS for Makers gives hobbyists and DIY designers full access to professional 3D CAD tools for personal use at a low yearly cost with direct online access to learning content and maker communities.



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SOLIDWORKS FOR STARTUPS

SOLIDWORKS for Startups provides eligible early-stage companies with affordable access to SOLIDWORKS software, training, and support to help bring product ideas to life.

What Makes It Stand Out?

- Free Tools for Early-Stage Innovation
- Training and Technical Support
- Helps Startups Accelerate Product Development

For hardware startups on tight budgets, purchasing high-end CAD software can be impossible. The SOLIDWORKS for Startups program gives qualifying new companies free access to SOLIDWORKS CAD and other product development tools. The program provides training and even co-marketing resources to increase a startup’s chances of success.



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SOLIDWORKS CERTIFICATION

SOLIDWORKS Certification provides industry-recognized credentials that validate users' proficiency with SOLIDWORKS tools. Certifications range from the basic Certified SOLIDWORKS Associate (CSWA) to the exceptional Certified SOLIDWORKS Expert (CSWE), with specialized paths for simulation, sheet metal, and more.

What Makes It Stand Out?

- *Recognized Proof of Skill and Expertise*
- *Boosts Career Opportunities*
- *Multiple Levels and Specialties*

As SOLIDWORKS became a standard in the industry, the company recognized the need for an official way to validate user expertise. Today, SOLIDWORKS Certification is an industry-recognized benchmark of proficiency. Earning a certification demonstrates solid CAD knowledge and following best practices, which can boost career opportunities.



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For 30 years, SOLIDWORKS has helped engineers and designers around the world turn ideas into working products. From pioneering Windows-native CAD in the mid-1990s to enabling cloud-connected, simulation-driven workflows, SOLIDWORKS has provided tools that help engineers build better products faster and more efficiently.

SOLIDWORKS will continue to help engineers work smarter and faster. That’s where artificial intelligence (AI) is starting to make a real difference.

The media often characterizes AI as having come out of nowhere. The reality is that the technology behind AI is not new, and it isn’t particularly scary. AI is advancing computer science to the next level in engineering productivity by capturing expert knowledge, flagging issues early, accelerating design iterations, and helping leaders make smarter decisions using real-time data.

Predictive analytics are giving executives a clearer view of the business impact of their decisions before they are made. AI-powered tools can now simulate design behavior, suggest material alternatives, forecast market risk, and even predict service needs based on real-time usage data. These insights are particularly valuable as engineers explore unconventional material options to meet performance, cost, and sustainability targets.

At SOLIDWORKS, we will continue to innovate our products and add the power of AI when and where it’s strategically beneficial for our users. Our goal is not just keeping up with change but getting ahead of it. We look forward to another 30 years of product development and supporting the incredible community of engineers and designers around the world.

INTRODUCTION

TOP TEN SOLIDWORKS FEATURES OR ENHANCEMENTS OVER THE LAST 30 YEARS

- 1) Multibody Modeling
- 2) Configurations
- 3) Mouse Gestures
- 4) FeatureManager
- 5) Hole Wizard
- 6) Interference Detection
- 7) Breadcrumbs
- 8) RealView Graphics
- 9) Cloud Services
- 10) SOLIDWORKS 1995

HONORABLE MENTIONS

- SOLIDWORKS User Group Network (SWUGN)
- SOLIDWORKS Education Edition
- SOLIDWORKS Champions
- SOLIDWORKS for Makers
- SOLIDWORKS for Startups
- SOLIDWORKS Certification

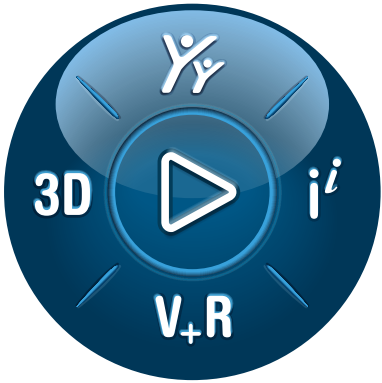
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**Virtual Worlds
for Real Life**



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