

# Dead Documents are Worthless: Bridging the User-IT gap in Enterprise UX

TREO Talk

Marlen Promann  
**Purdue University**  
Independent Interdisciplinary PhD  
marlen.promann@gmail.com

Nancy Rasche  
**Purdue University**  
Computer Graphics Technology  
nrasche@purdue.edu

All major manufacturing companies rely on product lifecycle management (PLM) software to integrate and align their vast and diverse teams that make our electronics, vehicles, home goods, to name a few. In order to support the great variety of employee goals the PLM software commonly entails a notable array of functions, which is why PLM software has been and still remains a complex software to use (Meier et al. 2017). Digitization and the associated data boom are changing how companies structure themselves across industries. There is a newfound interest to source and thread data in hopes of achieving a comparative advantage through ‘business intelligence’ (Lycett 2013). IT departments are generally tasked to lead these new value creations; however, the benefits of digital threading go far beyond competitive insight about operational efficiency and effectiveness. New threaded infrastructures and remote to server (thin-client) software has freed employees from their traditional constraints related to processes (time), locations (place), and the people (actors) with whom to cooperate or get work done (configurations) (Normann 2001). However, the potential benefits can be forgotten during the cumbersome transition.

We surveyed employees of a large manufacturing firm who is currently updating its product lifecycle management (PLM) software. Our goal was to understand user expectations of the envisioned software. We identified four major areas where end user expectations did not match current development plans:

1. **Clean Interface with Current Status Information** – Much of the existing PLM software was designed to support many different employees with highly variable tasks. This has resulted in cumbersome interfaces that confuse rather than guide users to their particular tasks. This can hinder employees’ self-efficacy at their job (Saenz et al. 2018).
2. **Support Employee Tasks in Agile and Collaborative Fashion** – Majority of existing solutions aggregate databases and resources without the much-desired benefits such as interoperability between resources and colleagues.
3. **Employees Need One Profile, but Many Roles** – A major concern for employers is to efficiently and effectively manage access and permissions of different teams and employees. Currently, this is one of the major disconnects between current solutions and end-users: there is a need for more structural transparency about user permissions and ability to request access.
4. **Track Interlinked Documents for Contextual Awareness** – One respondent’s point that “dead documents are worthless” illustrates user expectations of interoperability and contextual awareness with colleagues, and their hopes of reducing inefficiencies (e.g. duplicate work).

## References

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