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Editor's Pick of the Week—March 22, 2006

Shape Engine Finds Parts

Free-form sketch the part you need and 3D-Seek finds it and the source.

3D-Seek from [Imaginestics](#) (West Lafayette, IN) is a Web-based search engine that locates parts using your free-form sketch--not words or part numbers--to find parts with shapes that match yours. Currently in beta, the 3D-Seek portal focuses on the needs of manufacturing firms, containing catalogs with such items as hinges, bolts, conveyor belts, motors, and other such items.



Click to enlarge.

A successful 3D-Seek provides results ranked by the similarity of your sketch to parts found. It categorizes shapes on classification, displays thumb pictures, and provides links to the catalog in which the part was found. 3D-Seek can also accept faceted and tessellated models such as STL, JT, and VRML as well as such CAD formats as NX, SolidWorks, Inventor, Pro/E, IGES, DXF, and STEP. 3D-Seek can also be integrated with CAD and PLM systems to enable searches from within the user's application.

At press time, the company reports that its 3DSeek portal contains more than 6,000 parts and continues to grow as suppliers upload their files or as the system's i-crawler Web spider discovers parts online. A related technology, i-prowler, can hunt for CAD and image files on a user's computer and securely communicates the indexed information to the online database, making it available for on-line search.

A brief test drive by *DE* indicated that 3D-Seek can produce results quickly. Click [here](#) to visit 3D-Seek and test-drive it yourself.