

Amazon Launches Online 3D Printer Store

Written by Marco Attard
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As we predicted, Amazon has launched an online store featuring customisable 3D printed objects, which will be produced on demand by the company's 3D printing provider, and shipped to the client. This approach, bringing manufacturing several steps closer to the consumer without requiring them to invest in a printer in the home, was forecast in our overview of 3D printing in November 2013.



Amazon announced a marketplace that gives customers access to more than 200 unique print on-demand products, many that can be customised by material, size, styles and colour variations, and personalised with text and image imprints. The new store is one of the largest online destinations to discover 3D printed products featuring convenient search tools, interactive 3D preview functionality and a product personalisation widget. At launch to start, customers will find a wide range of items to browse including jewellery, toys, home décor and fashion accessories.

“The introduction of our 3D Printed Products store suggests the beginnings of a shift in online retail - that manufacturing can be more nimble to provide an immersive customer experience. Sellers, in alignment with designers and manufacturers, can offer more dynamic inventory for customers to personalise and truly make their own,” said Petra Schindler-Carter of Amazon.

iChannels predicted that: “manufacturing will be driven down the supply chain. It is likely that vendors, retailers and e-tailers will move production much closer to the front end - we can anticipate industrial scale 3D printers being installed into Amazon distribution centres, for example, with customer orders being printed to demand.”

This is likely to be just a first step in a potential revolution in short- and medium-run manufacturing, which will drive costs down, and extend the “long tail” of product availability. For the time being the project is US-only, and limited to a small selection of items. However it seems likely that once proven, Amazon will seek to extend the capability across an increasingly

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wide range of categories.

Channel players, and in particular distributors, would be wise to watch this development, and seek to participate as a 3D Printing Provider, or risk seeing their traditional business gradually erode.

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