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Understanding Value in Additive Manufacturing

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Additive manufacturing has been hailed as a world changing technology that in time will be ubiquitous and alter the way we make things and live. Futurists, technologists and self-proclaimed evangelists have all proclaimed this impending revolution. Corporations and equity markets have responded with investment and for a time robust valuation of additive manufacturing public companies. Like many bold claims there is an element of truth to these proclamations. However, they were also inadequate to fully understand additive manufacturing's true impact and value creation.

The additive manufacturing industry evolved from the prototyping industry. Consequently, it was both machine centric and shape focused. By shape focused I mean that the fundamental utility of what was purchased by the end

user was non-functional shapes. The true performance of the shape in terms of its actual material properties and dimensional properties was always a secondary consideration at best. The legacy machine technologies to make these shapes were also not designed and engineered for consistent high quality performance in order to deliver components with repeatable performance. Thus, began the evolution of a manufacturing and materials ecosystem that was originally designed for nonfunctional prototypes toward a robust mature production hardware manufacturing ecosystem. As of this writing this remains a work in progress as materials, additive manufacturing systems, software and automation continue to advance. Some additive manufacturing systems have great potential to advance into true production systems and some will simply never make the journey as they are inherently limited by the material systems, process technologies or the combination thereof.

"Until you quantify the performance to the industry standard and know what comes off the printer relative to the market of interest, your additive manufacturing initiative is aspirational"



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