



Choosing the right CAD software for your business

Questions you should ask before you buy

Choosing CAD software can be confusing. You want the features and licensing options that make you and your team more productive. The truth is - it isn't just the price you pay that matters. The right software will likely include features that save you so much time and labour costs that it more than pays for itself.

It pays to do your homework and ask the right questions. That's why we put together this simple guide. You can easily compare AutoCAD and AutoCAD LT to competitors. Plus, you'll find questions you should ask to better evaluate your options and examples of how CAD features can actually save you money.

The goal of using any software is to get more done in less time. With CAD software, the more advanced and productive the features, the less time you'll spend finishing a project. For most businesses, time equals money. Spend less time on a task and you save money.

Evaluate all software equally

To make a good comparison, you need a clear understanding of the features, limitations and costs associated with each product.

AutoCAD and AutoCAD LT provide many time-saving features. But do the competitors? Check out the comparison chart (on the following page) to see how AutoCAD stacks up against the competition. You'll want to know which features you're getting or giving up when you choose software.

Customization = more time savings

Your CAD team probably spends a lot of time doing repetitive tasks. Shaving a few seconds or even minutes off a task can add up to big annual time-savings.

With AutoCAD, you can customise the software to automate repetitive tasks. AutoCAD supports a variety of customisation technologies. If you're familiar with programming, you can create powerful programs using AutoLISP, Visual LISP or .NET to accelerate tasks for entire departments or workgroups. The possibilities are almost endless – limited only by your ability to identify which repetitive tasks you want to automate.

Questions you should ask

- Do you get the same productivity-boosting features as AutoCAD?
- Can the software support programming tools to automate repetitive tasks?
- Will you get the same labour savings available from AutoCAD?

How will you get help?

Over the lifetime of your software, you'll probably need to download bug fixes or service packs, get user support, and contact IT for assistance. It's all part of keeping your software running at peak performance. When you look at your CAD options, keep this in mind. Not all software support is created equal.

AutoCAD Time Saving Example

You use the Sheet Sets feature to print a 50-sheet job unattended, so you don't need to stand around while it prints. You save 20 minutes each time every week. **This adds up to 16 labour hours saved per year!**

(20 minutes per week x 48 work weeks per year.)






AutoCAD Time Saving Example

You use Tool Palettes to standardise component insertion. It saves 30 seconds per operation. A typical user might insert 30 components per day. **This adds up to of 60 labour hours saved per year!**

(30 seconds per insertion x 30 insertions per day x 240 work days per year.)

Compare AutoCAD to the competition

Not all CAD products are created equal. Autodesk software helps you do more in less time.

AutoCAD 2017	AutoCAD LT 2017	BricsCAD 2016	Draftsight 2016	ZWCAD Classic
				

Accessibility and mobile features

Access AutoCAD files on mobile devices	✓	✓	✓		✓
Publish and view drawings in any web browser	✓	✓	✓		✓
Mark up/annotate on your iPad without an internet connection	✓	✓	✓		✓
Allow users to comment/collaborate on published design files	✓	✓	✓		✓
Store files on other popular cloud providers, like Box	✓	✓	✓		✓
Access to prior release years at any time	✓	✓	Limited	Limited	

High productivity workflows

Import and convert PDF files	✓	✓			
Edit and print using logical sets of drawings with Sheet Set Manager	✓	✓	✓		
Print and plot batches of drawings at one time	✓	✓	✓		
Edit large sets of objects at once	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use smart annotative features like editable hatching, auto-dimensioning and revision clouds	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Work with reality capture data such as Point clouds with OSNAP	✓	Limited			
Work with coordinated BIM models like Navisworks or BIM360	✓				
Easily create professional renderings with a render box, presets or improved dialogs	✓			✓	
Create adaptable, reusable block libraries	✓	✓	✓		✓
Use 2D parametric constraints to automate part updates	✓	✓	✓		
Create geometry on geo mapping data	✓	✓			
Detect and comply with CAD standards	✓	✓		✓	
Use intelligent tool palettes to insert standard objects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Customise your interface

Create custom tailored menu and ribbon interfaces	✓	✓	✓	Limited	✓
Intuitively edit geometry with context sensitive ribbons	✓	✓	✓	Limited	✓
Easily identify and place blocks using visual galleries	✓	✓			
Robust library of 3rd party add-on applications	✓		Limited	Limited	Limited

Support questions you should ask

- Is live phone-based support available?
- Are service packs released on a timely basis and are they easy to deploy?
- Does the software provide certified hardware support for graphics cards and input devices?
- Is a network of training providers available to assist with implementation training?
- How much time could you spend debugging problems if there is no live phone support from a software company like BricsCAD or ZWCAD?
- How many labor hours would be lost due to a lack of support?

IT and Licensing: the great intangible

In addition to the CAD features of AutoCAD and AutoCAD LT, there are money-saving licensing and IT advantages over some of the competitors.

Network shared licensing– Rather than having to buy a license for every user (known as named user licensing), AutoCAD licenses may be shared amongst a pool of users to keep overall software costs down.

Prior version support– If project requirements dictate using older versions of AutoCAD or AutoCAD LT, Autodesk customers can immediately download and authorize prior versions via their subscription account without obtaining separate authorisation codes or paying additional fees.

Easy service pack upgrades and support– The Autodesk Desktop Application alerts you when new service packs are available so you can easily install them. Other software products may require you to find, download and install the service packs on your own.

There's more to a software purchase than just the initial investment. Keep in mind the ongoing cost of maintenance, support and licensing before you make a decision.

AutoCAD Time Saving Example

If you create a custom AutoLISP application and it's used by 10 designers in a single department and it saves 30 minutes per day for each user, **you could save 1,200 labour hours per year.**

(30 minutes per day x 10 users x 240 work days per year.)

AutoCAD Time Saving Example

If a Customised User Interface you create to streamline repetitive task allows you to save 10 minutes per day, **you could save a total of 40 labour hours per year.**

(10 minutes per day x 240 work days per year.)

AutoCAD Time Saving Example

If 10 CAD users are locked out of their software for 4 hours due to lack of real-time support, and they each make \$50/hour, then **the total loss would be \$2,000.**

Cost/Loss = 10 users x 4 hr/user x \$50/hr = \$2,000