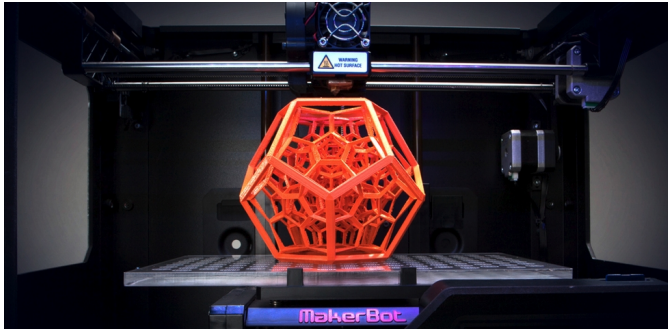


Gartner: 3D Printers to Grow by 108% in 2016

Written by Marco Attard
14 October 2016

Gartner reports global 3D printer shipments will total 455772 units in 2016-- a 108% increase over the 219168 units shipped in 2015, and a number set to reach over 6.7 million by 2020.



Growth in W. Europe should be "very strong" in 2016, even if it will be beaten by the high growth rates experienced in Chin and Asia/Pacific regions.

"Once a niche market, 3D printing has continued its rapid transformation into a broad-based mainstream technology embraced by consumers and enterprises around the world," the analyst remarks. "The evolution of hardware and software along with an ever-expanding collection of usable materials has driven growth in both the consumer and enterprise 3D printing markets."

3D printing is no longer the preserve of specialist industries, and currently finds a variety of uses in both consumer and enterprise applications. For instance it is used to create prototypes, augment manufacturing process and produce finished products, and Gartner expects more processes to emerge, leading to wider and more diverse growth.

The current 3D printing market covers 7 technologies, with material extrusion forecast to lead through 2020 thanks to low cost of entry-level material extrusion printers. Stereolithography printers should also grow at a "rapid rate," as new providers enter the market and the range of printable materials expands.

Leading in consumer 3D printers (costing under \$2500) is the purchase of low-cost devices by educational institutions and enterprise engineering, marketing and creative departments. Gartner says 3D printers find use by students in secondary and post secondary schools headed towards many career paths, such as engineering, manufacturing, aerospace and robotics.

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As for industry, the primary 3D printer drivers are the part quality, material advances and the ability to make prototypes, tools, fixtures and finished goods. Prototyping remains the main enterprise use for 3D printers throughout the forecast period, while use in the augmentation of manufacturing should grow to 75% of enterprises by 2020.

Gartner also expects 65% of discrete manufacturers using 3D printers to do so for the production of components found in the products they sell or service until the forecast period.

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