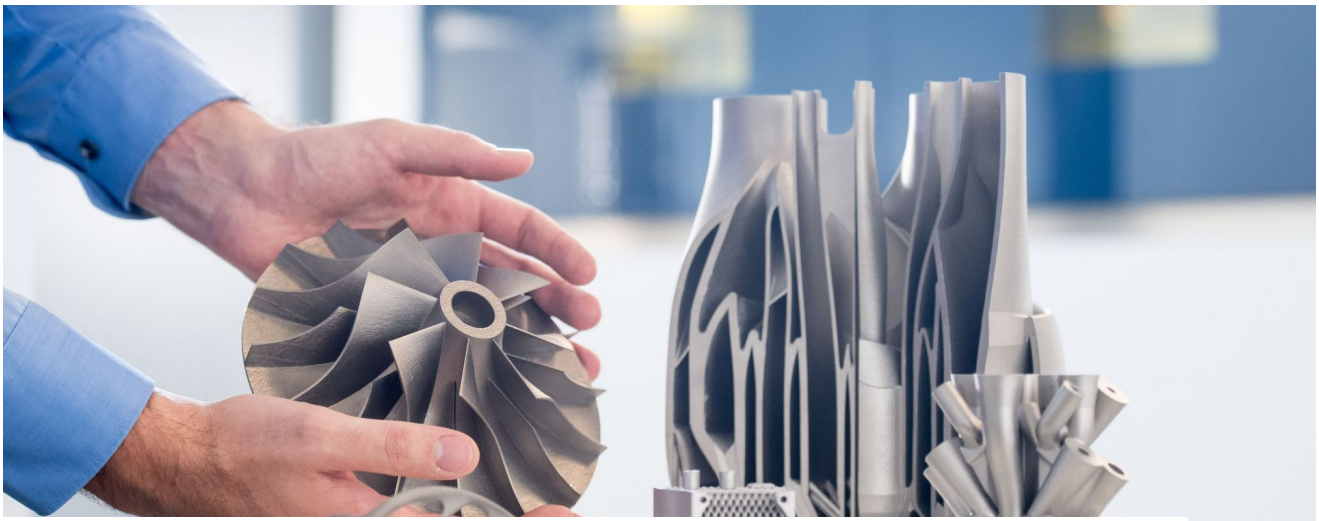

RAMONA HÖNL

3 tips for getting into 3D printing

First things first: additive manufacturing – also known as 3D printing – is not a miracle technology that is always suitable for manufacturing every type of component under the sun. The rule of thumb is that everything can be printed, but not everything makes economical sense. However, as the advantages of the process are often so far-reaching, 3D printing can confidently be described as the technology of the future. Are you considering getting into the industry? Here are three tips for how to get started.

What can 3D printing do, what is it suitable for, and how can I apply it to my manufacturing process? These are questions that you should ask yourself. For this, you need to acquire a fundamental understanding of the technology. Do you know anyone who uses a 3D printer? Go and take a closer look at it. Build up a solid knowledge base by visiting trade congresses, reading specialist literature and/or by working with a professional consultant, and then develop it step by step.

Identifying parts that are suitable for 3D printing takes practice. That is why we suggest first looking to your own range of parts and, with the help of an experienced partner, assessing the potential of each component together. Having help in this identification stage will focus your mind. And you will quickly learn for yourself, where the advantages of this technology are best put to use.

A manufacturing-friendly design is the linchpin of any technology. If, however, the manufacturing method has practically no limits, you need to rethink your design. The 3D printing rule is: "Form follows function". This means you need to be prepared to design with a strictly function-based approach. This may seem radical and unusual for some people, but it works best with professional support, in training sessions or by way of personal advice. Remember: invest the time and brain power, and incorporate the design expertise solidly within your own company. Ideally, carry out the redesigning process yourself, try out new things, test the results and keep at it. When it comes to 3D printing-friendly designs, always remember the following mantra: "Practice makes perfect."

RAMONA HÖNL

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