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MecSoft Mounts Campaign to Revolutionize CAM

By [Steven Blaski](#), CADdigest.com

"The big CAM software companies have been gouging their customers for years with overpriced software," says Greg Haywood, VP of sales at MecSoft Corporation, which recently released version 4 of its VisualMill software. "These legacy CAM companies have their resellers driving company Mercedes and handing out free t-shirts - and it looks very impressive until you realize that to pay for all that stuff they have to charge their customers exorbitant fees for their products."

MecSoft, on the other hand, plans to stay "lean and mean" so that the consumer is only paying for the software - not all that overhead, Haywood says "Our mission is to offer software that provides over 90 percent of the functionality of those older legacy systems while charging far less. We are revolutionizing the CAM industry."

A Code is Born

MecSoft was founded in December 1997 in Irvine, California, by Joe Anand, a product developer for Unigraphics before he struck out on his own. With no start-up capital, he launched his company. "MecSoft's expertise in designing and building robust CAM solutions, combined with leveraging 3rd party software libraries such as OpenGL graphics [a cross-platform standard for 3D rendering and 3D hardware acceleration], which Microsoft had just introduced with the NT system, made it possible for us to create the kind of Windows-based CAM product that UG wasn't interested in but which we knew held great promise," says Joe Anand.



With its Windows-like interface, VisualMill is much easier to learn than the DOS- or Unix-based CAM programs such as Mastercam or SURFCAM, Anand says. "With VisualMill there is little or no formal training needed, and most users can be machining with the program within half a day of loading it on their machines."

Visual Mill includes a library of post processors for 60 CNC machines at no charge. "Our competition makes you buy their post processors," says Anand. "We give them away."

Does Visual Mill include modeling tools? No, it doesn't -- nor does Anand feel his product needs to. CAM customers don't use CAM to model; they use their CAD tools. So why pay for code that essentially reinvents the wheel?

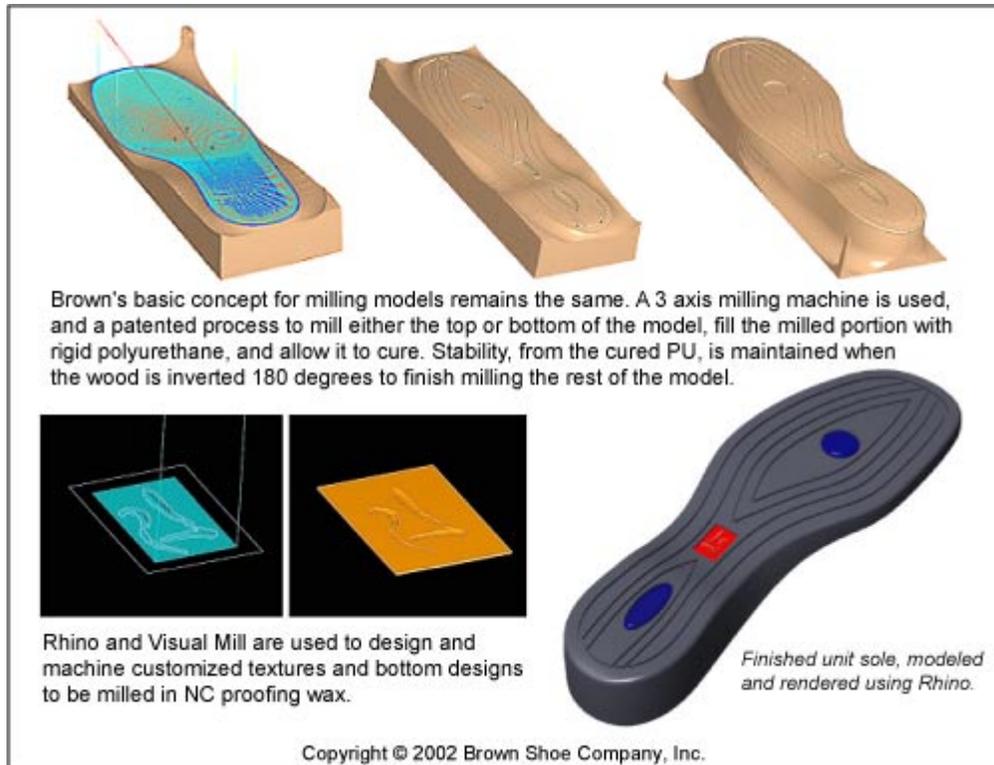
Anand's first big break came when the Roland Digital Group of America signed on MecSoft as an OEM to provide the software to run some of their desktop CNC scanning and milling machines. Next, MecSoft partnered with the Japanese CAD/CAM company Hitachi Zosen Information Systems, which has integrated VisualMill into its Space-E CAM system for use in the die and mold industry. More recently, MecSoft entered into a partnership with Robert McNeel and Associates, makers of Rhinoceros, to offer RhinoCAM (combining VisualMill 4.0 and Rhino3D) for \$1,495.00 when purchased together for the first 500 customers.

One of the first to take advantage of the Rhino-MecSoft partnership is Brown Shoes, one of the largest shoe retailers in the U.S. The company recently conducted a comprehensive search to replace its outdated Unix-based system with a new PC-based 3D CAD/CAM system.



Molded insole and children's' foot-measuring device were modeled and rendered with Rhino. Brown's 3D system is primarily used for the prototyping of individual models for stylist approval, developing special shoe components (such as custom-molded insoles for mass production) and various experimental projects for R&D. *Courtesy of Brown Shoe Company*

"We focused on Visual Mill from MecSoft Corporation because of its ability to accept and toolpath native Rhino models, and the evaluation software that we downloaded proved to be very promising, but again, an actual benchmark test would be needed," says a Brown spokesperson. "With the helpful cooperation of VisualMill's support team, we were able to do a complete evaluation, and approve the purchase."



Coexisting Peacefully

Now with a team of 11 people, most of whom are product developers, and 20 international sellers, MecSoft is setting its sights on a market that may have, by its own estimation, half a million potential users. But it is also a market crowded with competitors. Does the company view itself as a giant killer?

Anand concedes the "\$5,000" marketplace where many vendors have been battling it out for years "We don't see VisualMill so much replacing the Mastercams and the Delcams as we see it coexisting with these other systems," Haywood adds. "A lot of companies have, say, X amount of seats of these traditional systems and would like more but they can't afford it. That's where VisualMill comes in. For about the price of one seat of these legacy systems you can buy five+ seats of VisualMill - and with no time lost for training."

But what about the CAM products in the sub-\$1,000 price range? Anand dismisses both IMSI's recently introduced TurboCAD/CAM and BobCAD as incomplete solutions. "Their combined CAD/CAM functionality is not complete enough for the professional. Our expertise is CAM and that is what we do best. We partner with best of breed CAD products to offer the best possible combination of CAD and CAM functionality to our users" he replies. Anand adds, "We've also worked hard to make the program compatible with all the leading 3D modeling systems, so therefore interoperability is seamless."

Integration is achieved mostly through being able to read native DWG files (MecSoft is a member of the OpenDWG consortium) as well as through IGES and DXF. It can also directly read Rhino files.

But what about that old saw – you get what you pay for? Will potential consumers be wary of VisualMill, assuming a product that inexpensive can't be any good? "I've never met anyone who likes to throw money away," Haywood says. "VisualMill offers almost the same functionality as the other systems, while at the same time being easier to use and much less expensive. Once you understand that, choosing VisualMill becomes easy."

Offering similar functionality at a fraction of the cost, however, is not an original concept. Autodesk blew away the competition with the concept more than 10 years ago and no one has done it since. Despite notable campaigns from Visio's IntelliCAD and IMSI's TurboCAD, CAD and CAM users have shown a remarkable tenacity in hanging on to their old tools, despite the cacophony of vendors hawking newer, cheaper ones. How does MecSoft aim to be the one that breaks through? Anand is confident that to know Visual Mill is to love it and he plans on getting the word out to as many as he can. MecSoft has mounted a campaign to introduce itself to potential users through the industry press. It claims that its Windows-based ease of use will be a big selling point.

For more information on MecSoft Corporation and VisualMill, visit <http://www.mecsoft.com/downloads.htm>. To test drive an evaluation demo of VisualMill 4.0, visit <http://MecSoft.com/downloaddemo.htm>.