

A tiny revelation at Product Resolutions

The added clout and compact size of the HP Z240 SFF has got the two-man team questioning the value of their existing workstation ‘beasts’

The two-man team at design consultancy Product Resolutions shares a passion for shiny new gadgets. At the company’s Norwich office, you’ll find Sonos wireless speakers, Nest security devices and Philips Hue wireless lighting.

This enthusiasm for all things tech spills over into the tools Paul Robbins and Nick Harvey use to get work done: 3D printers for prototyping and creating small parts, a custom workstation each running Dassault Systèmes SOLIDWORKS, plus a third workstation for network rendering in Luxion KeyShot.

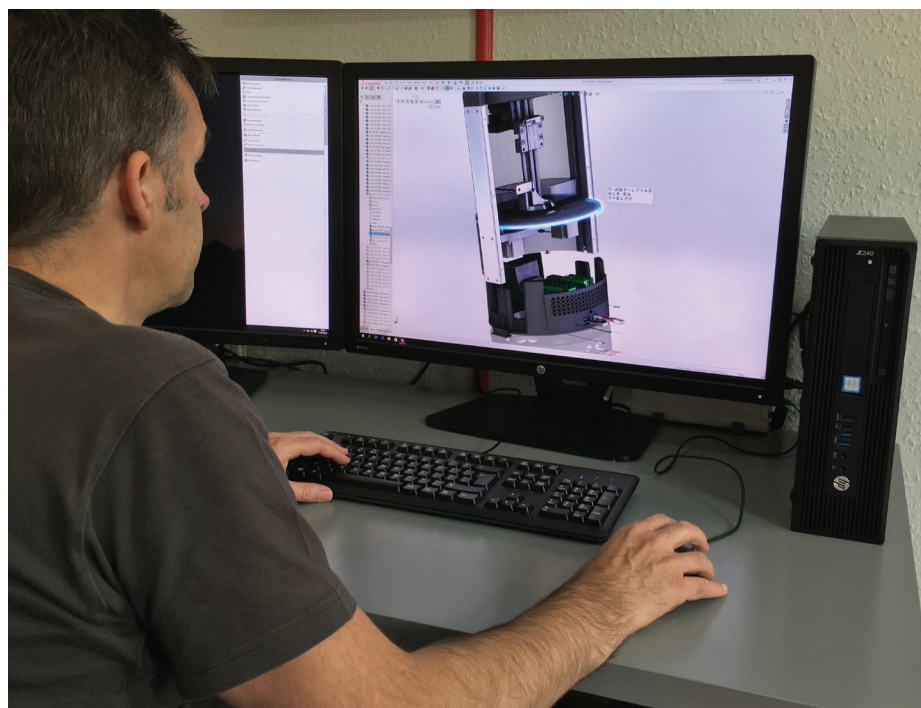
That armoury supports work in designing a broad range of products for clients, from toys to medical devices, to consumer products and industrial equipment, including Autodesk’s Ember 3D printer. With experience in China and the Far East, Product Resolutions also gets involved in helping customers organise the manufacture of products, too. Right now, Robbins and Harvey are working on an airbed controller that helps medical staff turn and lift bed-ridden patients, production equipment for Rolls Royce’s jet engines division, a camping stove which uses a new innovative fuel and a treat dispenser for cats.

For that first project — designing the air blower for the patient bed — Robbins trialled an HP Z240 SFF workstation. The project involves a complex SOLIDWORKS assembly, as he explains:

“It’s a fully detailed model now, complete with all the screw fixings, and there’s probably around 100 components in total.”

“It’s been very stable, smooth and quick,” says Robbins of the HP Z240 SFF. “I loaded the model onto the hard drive of the new machine and to the hard drive of one of our existing machines and the HP was quicker. It took the HP machine 11 seconds to load and refresh the model, compared to 18 seconds on one of our machines.”

With a low profile AMD FirePro W4300 graphics card inside, the HP Z240 SFF offers more powerful



3D performance than most Small Form Factor workstations. The added clout has encouraged Robbins to explore SOLIDWORKS RealView, viewing models in real time, with realistic materials and lighting.

Prior to the trial, Robbins worked predominantly in shaded and edges mode. “Way back RealView used to make our machines so clunky,” he explains. “It’s so long since we’ve had it [RealView] switched on, which sounds ridiculous, but you get into habits, don’t you?”

Viewing SOLIDWORKS models with RealView has been something of a revelation and he can now see its potential for client presentations. “Sometimes, when you’re working on modelling internal parts, it’s a bit dark and shadowy, so we switch RealView off then. But when we’re doing

screenshots to show clients, it’ll be nice to have it switched on then,” he says, adding that he may even experiment with live presentations, showing SOLIDWORKS screens to clients over Skype, for example.

The HP Z240 SFF, he points out, costs around half as much as Product Resolutions’ current custom workstations and not only outperforms them, but also beats these “beasts” hands-



“Given the price, the spec, the compact size — there’s no compromise [with the HP Z240 SFF]”
Paul Robbins, Product Resolutions

down when it comes to size. That means the HP machine could be discreetly hung from the bottom of his desk, out of the way and saving on space, he says.

It could also be taken home for evenings and weekends. “It’s obviously bigger than a laptop, but if you’ve got a monitor set up at home, it would be perfectly feasible to carry it home and use it there. It wouldn’t be a big deal to transport it. And it also lets you have a bit more flexibility of location within the office, too,” he comments.

During its time in use at Product Resolutions, the HP Z240 SFF didn’t get too hot, he adds, or create much noise. “We’re in a pretty small office,” says Robbins, “so the environmental perspective matters and it was all good. It just sat quite happily on a shelf unit.”

All in all, it’s been a positive experience. “I’d definitely look at a smaller machine now. I wouldn’t have done before, not as our main workstation,” Robbins says. “But given the price, the spec, the compact size - there’s no compromise with it.”

MORE INFORMATION HP.COM/GO/Z240