

WORKING REMOTELY



Objective

The aim of this short paper is to introduce the tools that I use to work remotely.

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Introduction

Online collaboration is here to stay.

Getting the skills you want, when you want, without the commitment of employing another member of staff can offer substantial cost savings and flexibility to your business.

I started working remotely with clients back in 2009. Over the years I have found that for mechanical design work there are times when a face-to-face meeting can still be beneficial.

The start of a project or a particularly important design review can still warrant a site visit, but the vast majority of work really can be done online. The caveat however is that we need the right tools to help everybody work together effectively.

The 8 remote working tools I use have evolved from a long process of attrition.

When we work together it is likely that you will need to use one or more of these tools in some way. Whilst you should be assured that none of them are difficult, I have instructions prepared that you will find in the welcome pack I send out upon the start of a project.

So onto the tools...

Tool 1: Basecamp

The first tool is a piece of project management software that is accessed via the web.

I have found Basecamp to be absolutely essential, to the point where I have used it at times with a team when we have all been sat in the same office.

Basecamp works by setting tasks. Each task has an online page where a conversation can take place. We can upload sketches, videos and technical documents into the conversation which helps us to document the decision making process.

Learning to use Basecamp takes less than 10 minutes. If you can send an email you can use Basecamp.

It is important to note that access into a Basecamp project is strictly limited by the project manager. At the conclusion of a project ownership of the IP can be transferred over to a nominated person or a HTML copy can be created.



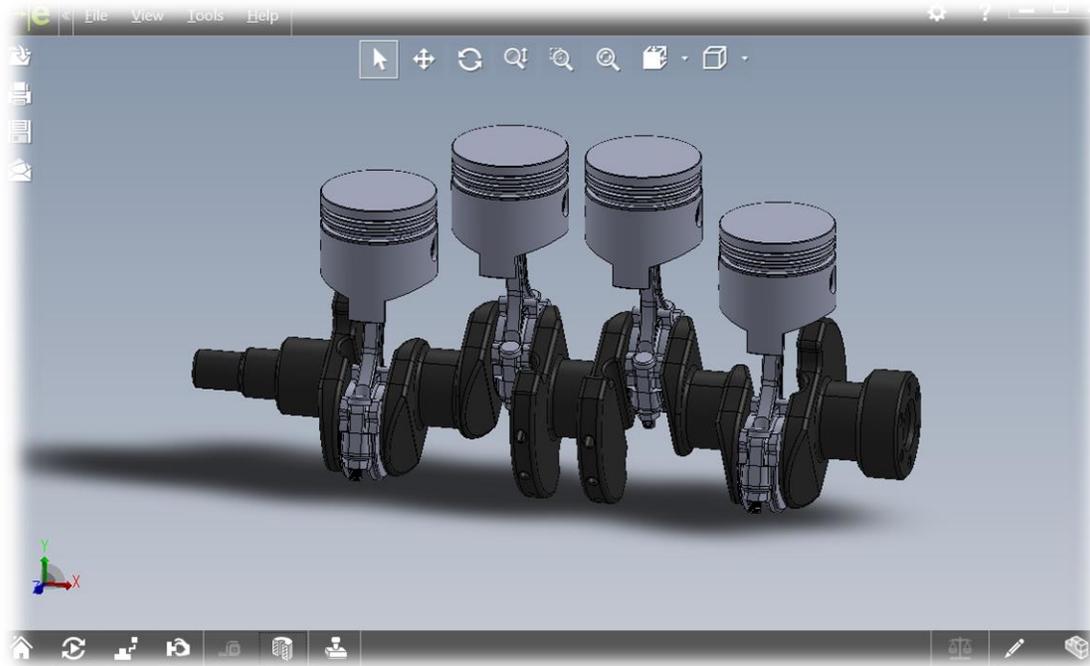
Try it at: www.basecamp.com

Tool 2: Free CAD Viewer

If you don't have CAD software I can export out a special file type that allows you to view CAD files on your computer.

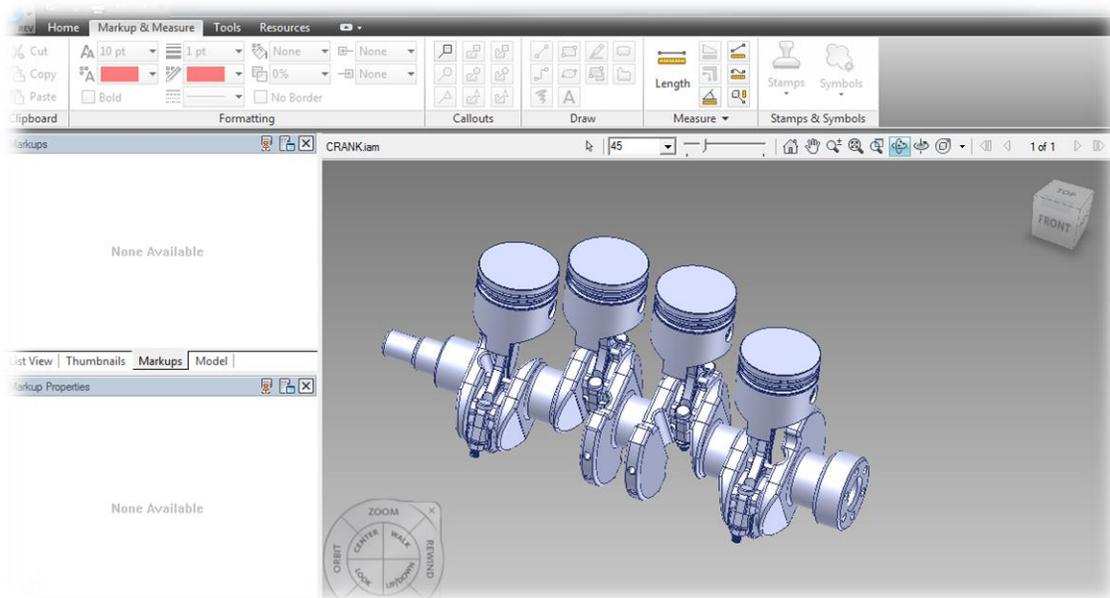
A CAD viewer gives you the ability to spin a CAD model around, zoom in and out, take measurements and even add comments and sketches onto the model.

eDrawings is the free viewer used with Solidworks files...



Try it at: www.edrawingsviewer.com

Whilst Autodesk Design Review is used for Inventor files.



Try it at: www.autodesk.com/products/design-review/download.com

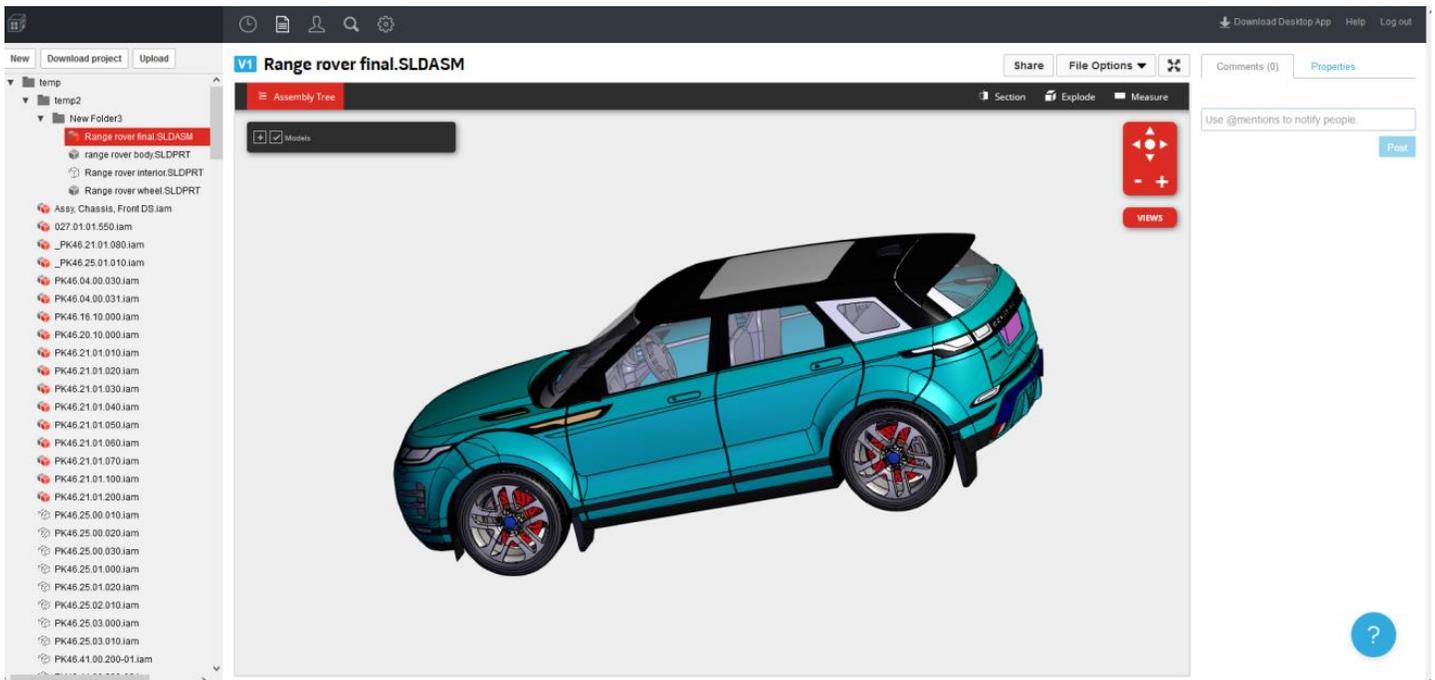
Tool 3: GrabCAD

Implementing a secure remote access data management system is difficult not to mention expensive.

I strongly favour a cloud based approach run by an American company called GrabCAD.

I used to pay for their service until out of the blue they made it available for free. The level of data security is very high and their system is solution neutral which allows revision control for all CAD formats.

I also like the fact that we can set up what is known as a “Partner Space”. A Partner Space is an invite only folder that customers, supplier, fabricators can be given access to. This approach makes sharing data a lot simpler.



Try it at: www.grabcad.com

Tool 4: Skype

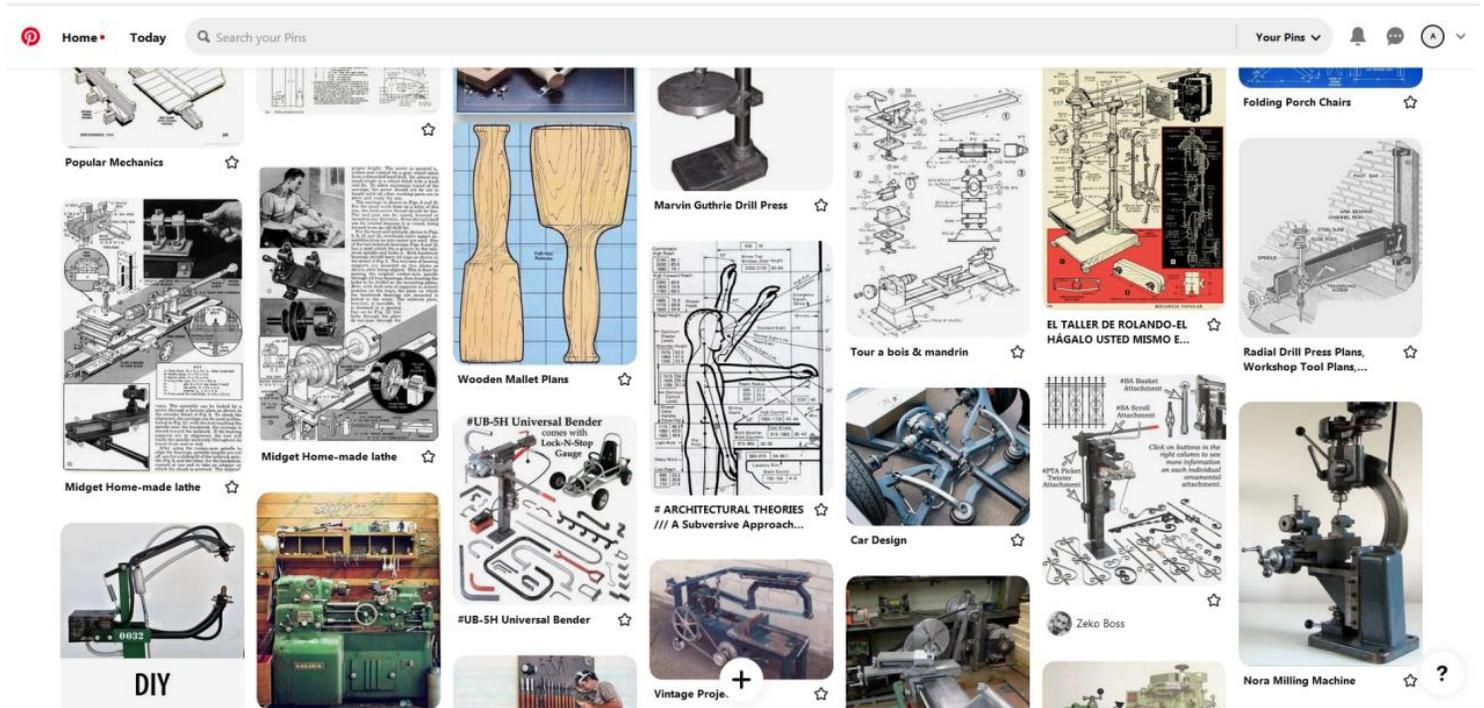
Skype hardly needs an introduction. However you might not be aware that when working with clients in a completely different country Skype gives us the ability to set up a telephone number for their region. This then allows a remote client to call the office from a standard landline at their local rate.



Try it at: www.skype.com

Tool 5: Pinterest

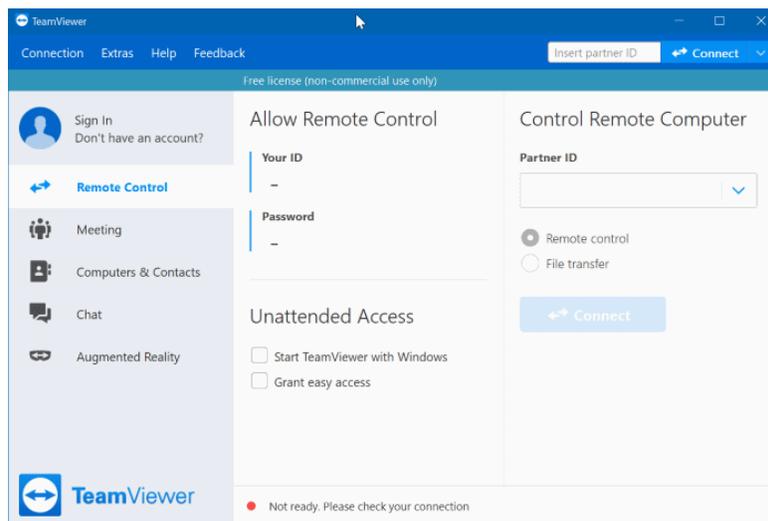
Pinterest is great for a client who wants to convey how they want something to look. By downloading a simple extension for their web browser it is a quick and easy process to then start building up an online scrap book of reference images. This collection can easily be shared or transformed into a more formal mood board.



Try it at: www.pinterest.com

Tool 6: TeamViewer

This clever piece of software is used to share screens and it also allows for the remote control of another computer. When collaborating on complex CAD models it has proven itself to be extremely useful.



Try it at: www.teamviewer.com

Tool 7: CamStudio

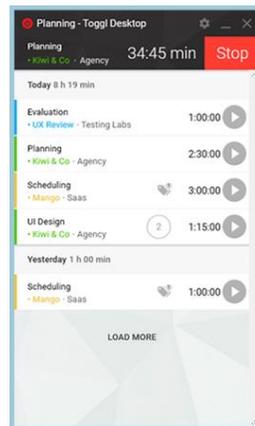
In order to create tutorials for training staff or to walk a client through a sequence of complex steps I have found the use of screen recording software to be very effective. The open source solution by CamStudio is highly recommended.



Try it at: www.camstudio.org

Tool 8: Toggl

The final tool is used for tracking time when working with a distributed team. Toggl is a small application that runs in the background monitoring the length of time taken on a specific task. At the end of the week we can then use this information to generate a time sheet.



Try it at: www.toggl.com

Thanks for taking the time to read this short paper.

If you have a mechanical design problem that you would like to discuss then get in touch today:

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