

Protolabs to Hubs

Using content to bridge two platforms

The problem

After acquiring Hubs, Protolabs wanted to find a quick way to explore integrating Hubs' expanded offerings into the Protolabs e-commerce platform.

A complete software integration will take *years* to build. The design team was asked to find a way to explore an integration that would allow further learning and would take only *weeks* to build.



Background info

1. Customers use Protolabs to quickly order low quantities of simple parts at a premium cost.
2. Hubs customers tend to order larger quantities of complex parts with slower lead times at budget prices.
3. The marketplace model of Hubs is a huge concern for many Protolabs customers, who often need domestically produced parts by the same manufacturer. Providing this information without worrying customers would be a challenge.

The initial solution

The UX team decided to treat this primarily as a content-first solution. I developed a modular approach that would allow the team to see exactly what messaging converted, remove steps where we observed fall offs, and make quick adjustments based on our findings:

1. *In situ* messaging on Protolabs
2. Modal on Protolabs explaining the Hubs offer
3. Concierge page on Hubs

In situ messaging: bulk pricing, anodizing, tolerances

Control Casing (Quote 1234-567) Upload CAD Files Configure Review Quote

Quote Quote Options Checkout Now

CNC Machining (1 part) ITAR or Export Controlled? No Change

Bracket.stl 1169-3084-001
Current Revision: 1
Aluminum 6061-T651
Edges broken (tool marks visible)
X: 148.72mm Y: 13.97mm Z: 118.91mm
Machining Tolerance: +/- 0.005 in. (0.13mm)

Quantity: 1

Save up to 10x! See bulk pricing

1 parts @ \$000.00	\$000.00
Total	\$000.00

Order by Today 7:10 PM
Receive by Mon Apr 3

Expedite	Expedite	Expedite	Standard	Economy	Economy
Fri Mar 31	Mon Apr 1	Tue Apr 2	Wed Apr 3	Fri Apr 7	Fri Apr 13
+\$000.00	+\$000.00	+\$000.00		-\$000.00	-\$000.00

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Edges broken (tool marks visible)
X: 148.72mm Y: 13.97mm Z: 118.91mm
Machining Tolerance: +/- 0.005 in. (0.13mm)

Quantity: 1

1 parts @ \$000.00	\$000.00
3 Day Manufacturing	Standard
Total	\$000.00

Order by Today 7:10 PM
Receive by Mon Apr 3

Expedite	Expedite	Expedite	Standard	Economy	Economy
Fri Mar 31	Mon Apr 1	Tue Apr 2	Wed Apr 3	Fri Apr 7	Fri Apr 13
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CNC Machining (1 part) ITAR or Export Controlled? No Change

Bracket.stl 1169-3084-001
Current Revision: 1
Aluminum 6061-T651
Edges broken (tool marks visible)
See anodizing options
X: 148.72mm Y: 13.97mm Z: 118.91mm
Machining Tolerance: +/- 0.005 in. (0.13mm)

Quantity: 1

1 parts @ \$000.00	\$000.00
3 Day Manufacturing	Standard
Total	\$000.00

Order by Today 7:10 PM
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Expedite	Expedite	Expedite	Standard	Economy	Economy
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+\$000.00	+\$000.00	+\$000.00		-\$000.00	-\$000.00

General messaging on Protolabs

PROTOLABS

First Name L. ▾

- Projects
- Parts
- Molds
- Order History
- Shared with Me
- Design Guides
- Contact Us
- Give us Feedback

Control Casing (Quote 1234-567)

Upload CAD Files Configure Review Quote

Quote Quote Options ▾ Checkout Now

CNC Machining (1 part) ITAR or Export Controlled? No Change

Extra configuration and production options available from the Protolabs Network, powered by Hubs



Bracket.stl
1169-3084-001
Current Revision: 1
Aluminum 6061-T651
Edges broken (tool marks visible)
Threading (0 features selected [view](#))
X: 148.72mm Y: 13.97mm Z: 118.91mm
Machining Tolerance: +/- 0.005 in. (0.13mm)
[See more tolerance options from our network](#)

View Analysis
Configure Part
Upload Revision
Part Options ▾

Ready to order ⓘ

Quantity: - +

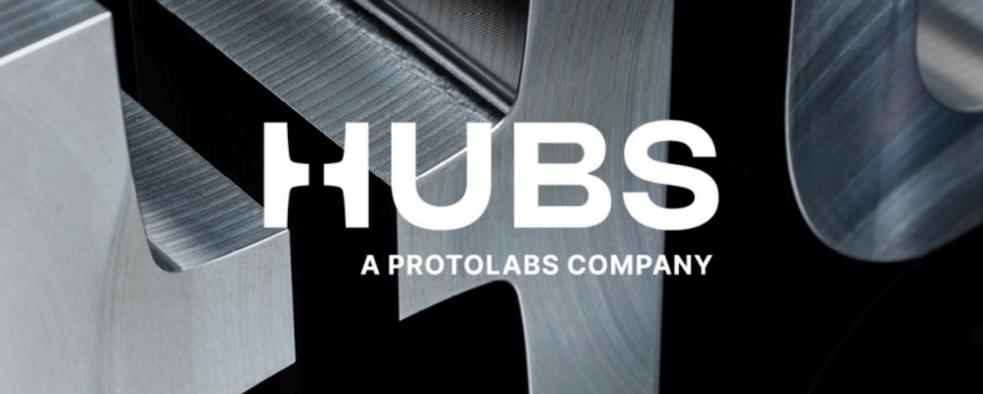
[Get volume pricing from our network](#) ⓘ

1 parts @ \$000.00	\$000.00
3 Day Manufacturing	Standard
1 parts @ \$000.00	\$000.00
1 parts @ \$000.00	\$000.00
Total	\$000.00

Order by Today 7:10 PM
Receive by **Mon Apr 3**

Expedite	Expedite	Expedite	Standard	Economy	Economy
Fri Mar 31	Mon Apr 1	Tue Apr 2	Wed Apr 3	Fri Apr 7	Fri Apr 13
+\$000.00	+\$000.00	+\$000.00		-\$000.00	-\$000.00

Protolabs modal explorations



More options available from Hubs

Hubs is our global manufacturing network that offers:

- Anodizing available with Type II & III finishes
- Tighter tolerances with precision up to .020 mm (.001")
- Volume pricing can save you up to 90% per part

[Get an Instant Quote from Hubs](#)

[No thanks](#)



Get tighter tolerances

Linear tolerances up to .001" and engineering fits are available from our global network of manufacturers

[Get an instant quote](#)

This quote will be managed by Hubs. [Learn more](#)

The concierge page on Hubs

PROTOLABS × HUBS

Get anodizing, tighter tolerances and volume pricing from Hubs, a Protolabs company

ISO certified

Join other companies using Hubs

Welcome to Hubs

We're already pricing your parts and building a quote. You can select specifications, upload technical drawings and see volume pricing on the quote page.

- Select from a wide range of manufacturing capabilities
- How we protect your IP
- How we ensure consistency and quality
- How we source your parts from vetted manufactures

[Continue to your quote](#)

⚠ Uploading weapons or parts subject to export control regulations, such as **ITAR**, **EAR** beyond EAR 99, or **EU Dual Use**, is a violation of our [terms of use](#)

The welcome banner on Hubs

HUBS A PROTO LABS COMPANY New quote

Untitled quote 1A2B3C4D5-V1 [+ New version](#) Total: **\$502.24** [Lock](#) [Place order](#)

Welcome to Hubs, a Protolabs company ×
Hubs' global network of manufacturing partners offers a wider selection of surface finishes, tighter tolerances and bulk pricing options.

Parts & specifications CNC machining [Change technology](#)

Select all parts

	Specifications	Quantity	Price
 View DFM analysis Part_1.sld 100.00 x 100.00 x 100.00 mm ~1000.00mm ³	CNC machining Aluminum 6061 As machined (Ra 3.2µm, 126µin) No part markings General tolerance: ISO 2768 Fine No tighter tolerances No fits No threads Sharp internal corners rounded to 2 mm	1	\$126.05 \$126.05 p/part

Lead time

Manufactured in the USA ⓘ		
Rapid	5 business days	\$886.78
Expedited	9 business days	\$473.40
Standard	13 business days	\$397.62
Manufactured globally		
Expedited	9 business days	\$394.50
Standard	13 business days	\$331.35
Economy	18 business days	\$287.38

Shipping customs costs included

1 business day	\$45.00
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Initial findings

The approach of using multiple, independent steps in this flow allowed the team to experiment with removing content and testing conversion.

This led to us to remove the modal on Protolabs and taking customers straight to the concierge page on Hubs, which was the exact opposite of I had expected.

Both the *in situ* messaging and general messaging performed well, leading to us keeping both.

Further research

In interviews with both customers and members of the sales team, I identified some overlooked information needs in this flow:

- A general landing page about the Protolabs and Hubs integration.
- Protolabs customers usually skipped the Hubs marketing funnel and went straight to uploading CAD files. This meant that they missed out on important confidence building information that organic Hubs customers would have already seen.

The landing page

The screenshot shows a landing page for Hubs & Protolabs. The top navigation bar includes the Hubs logo (A PROTOLABS COMPANY), menu items for 'How it works', 'Capabilities', 'Materials', 'Resources', and 'Company', a 'Get instant quote' button, and a user profile icon. The main heading is 'The Protolabs Network—powered by Hubs', followed by a sub-headline: 'Combining the speed of Protolabs with the capabilities of Hubs to get the most out of digital manufacturing'. Below this is a section titled 'Better parts, faster with Hubs & Protolabs' with a paragraph explaining the 2021 acquisition. A central question, 'Protolabs or Hubs, what's right for you?', is followed by two columns. The left column features an image of a Protolabs factory with the text 'Unparalleled speed from Protolabs' and a paragraph describing their lightning-fast manufacturing. The right column features an image of a Hubs factory with the text 'More options and capacity from Hubs' and a paragraph describing their expanded manufacturing capabilities.

HUBS A PROTOLABS COMPANY

[How it works](#) [Capabilities](#) [Materials](#) [Resources](#) [Company](#) [Get instant quote](#)

The Protolabs Network—powered by Hubs

Combining the speed of Protolabs with the capabilities of Hubs to get the most out of digital manufacturing

Better parts, faster with Hubs & Protolabs

In 2021, Protolabs acquired Hubs to create the world's most comprehensive online manufacturing platform. Whether you need local speed for prototyping or cost-competitive solutions for production at scale, it's one solution for all of your manufacturing needs.

Protolabs or Hubs, what's right for you?



Unparalleled speed from Protolabs

Protolabs offers lightning-fast manufacturing with automated in-house machines. For geometrically simple, time-sensitive projects, such as quick-turn prototyping and low-volume production, Protolabs is the go-to solution.



More options and capacity from Hubs

Hubs' digital network of suppliers offers expanded manufacturing capabilities for geometrically complex and cosmetically demanding parts with volume pricing on production orders.

[before] The Hubs upload page and checkout

- Customers said the “B2C feel” was off putting
- Getting more information about Hubs required customers to leave the flow

HUBS A PROTO LABS COMPANY

Quotes Orders

Select technology

- CNC machining**
Milling (3-axis, 5-axis), turning
- 3D printing**
FDM, SLA, SLS, MJF, DMLS
- Sheet metal**
Laser cutting, bending

Upload your files to get an instant quote and DfM feedback

Drag and drop or
[Select files](#)

File types: STL, OBJ, STEP, IGES, SLDPRPT, 3DM, IPT, SAT and X_T files File size: < 120Mb Part size: < 3000*3000*3000 mm

Privacy: All your files are entirely secured with us (read our [Privacy Guarantee](#)). If you can't upload one of your parts at this time, you can also try our checkout with one of our sample parts. [How it works \(2:34\)](#) [Use sample part](#)

Available payment methods Or upload a signed quote/purchase order (PO) for Net30 payment terms

	CNC machining Aluminum 6061 As machined (Ra 3.2µm, 126µin) No part markings General tolerance: ISO 2768 Fine No tighter tolerances No fits No threads Sharp internal corners rounded to 2 mm	1 \$126.05 \$126.05 p/part
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[View DfM analysis](#)

Part_3.sld
100.00 × 100.00 × 100.00 mm
~1000.00mm³

[Upload parts](#) or drag and drop

File types: STL, OBJ, STEP, IGES, SLDPRPT, 3DM, IPT, SAT and X_T files File size: < 120Mb Part size: < 3000*3000*3000 mm

Shipping address
Northern Ireland, BT12 7AL

Billing address
Northern Ireland, BT12 7AL

Quality documentation
Not required

Subtotal **\$451.48**
Sales tax 0% **\$84.28**

[Apply discount code](#)

Total **\$502.24**

[Place order](#)

Available payment methods

Or upload a signed quote/purchase order (PO) for Net30 payment terms

[Contact support](#)

You acknowledge that you have read and understand our content policy and certify that your technical data and any related item are not: (1) controlled under the [ITAR](#), (2) or subject to the [EAR](#), and controlled at any level beyond EAR99 or (3) a [weapon](#) or any similar or related item or component thereto.

[after] The Hubs upload page and checkout

Select technology

 **CNC machining**
Milling (3-axis, 5-axis), turning

 **3D printing**
FDM, SLA, SLS, MJF

 **Sheet metal**
Laser cutting, bending

 **Injection molding**
Single cavity molds, family molds

Upload your CAD files to get an instant quote



Drag and drop here or [select files](#)

File types: STEP, STP, IGES, IGS, SLDPRG, 3DM, SAT, X_T

Uploading weapons or parts subject to export control regulations such as **ITAR, EAR** beyond EAR99, or **EU Dual Use** is a violation of our [terms of use](#)

 **Privacy:** All your files are secure with us. Read our [privacy policy](#).

Want to see how the platform works before uploading your own parts?

[▶ Watch demo](#)

 [Use our sample part](#)

Subtotal	€241.35
VAT 21%	€50.68

[Have a discount code?](#)

Total	€292.03
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[Go to checkout](#)

 [Lock price](#)

Payment options

- Instant payment via credit card, iDEAL, SOFORT, or Giropay
- To set up Hubs as a vendor, please [contact us](#)
- NET 30 terms available via purchase order or signed quote

Need help with your quote? [Contact support](#)

ISO certified



We're trusted by



FAQs

Where are my parts made? 

How do you ensure quality and consistency? 

Do you clear customs on international orders? 

Can I get an NDA signed? 

What payment options do you accept? 

Conclusions and next steps

- It was possible to create a bridge between two completely different platforms primarily using content.
- The modular approach to content allowed us to build quickly and make changes based on data.
- The success of this flow proved that Protolabs customers are interested in the Hubs offering and have informed software development priorities for a more robust integration.