

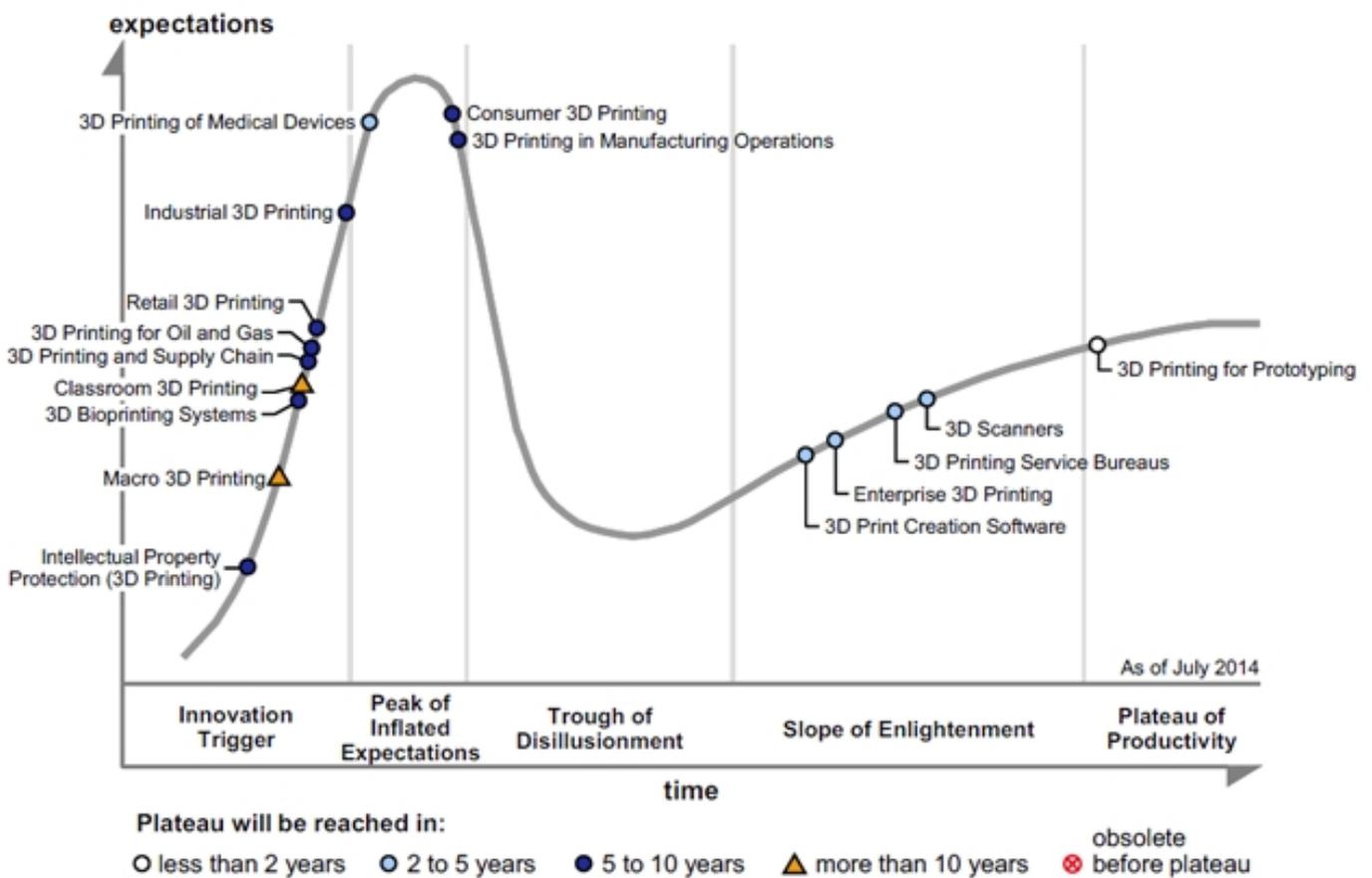
Gartner: Mainstream 3D Printing "Will Take Time"

Written by Marco Attard
21 August 2014

According to Gartner 3D printing might be evolving rapidly but it is still at least 5 to 10 years away from consumer adoption, even as enterprise and medical applications start seeing more compelling use cases.

"Today, approximately 40 manufacturers sell the 3D printers most commonly used in businesses, and over 200 startups worldwide are developing and selling consumer-oriented 3D printers, priced from just a few hundred dollars," the analyst says. "However, even this price is too high for mainstream consumers at this time, despite broad awareness of the technology and considerable media interest."

Figure 1. Hype Cycle for 3D Printing, 2014



Source: Gartner (July 2014)

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The Gartner Hype Cycle for 3D printing notes two running themes for the nascent industry-- enterprise and consumer 3D printing are very different from each other, and 3D printing consists of not of one but seven technologies.

First off, consumer and enterprise 3D printing represent different uses and requirements, even if organizations currently make use of "consumer" devices. This demands separate evaluation of the two markets.

Second, as Gartner puts it "3D printing involves a complex ecosystem of software, hardware and materials whose use is not as simple to use as 'hitting print' on a paper printer." Thus, to evaluate which printer to choose one needs to start from the end product. For instance will it be used for prototyping, a 3D printing mainstay since the beginning?

The education market will also see 3D printing adoption, but the analyst says this will happen in 10 years' time-- after all the adoption of new technology within secondary and post-secondary schools is both expensive and difficult to implement.

Meanwhile enterprise adoption will be faster, pushed by continued acceptance and use of 3D printing software, scanners and service bureaus.

Go [Gartner Hype Cycle for 3D Printing 2014](#)