



# PROTOLABS®

Manufacturing. Accelerated.®

## Product Development Outlook: Economy, Workforce Overtake Supply Chain Challenges as Key Innovation Roadblocks

April 9, 2024

More than 700 engineers and developers weighed in on the product development challenges of today and the future

MINNEAPOLIS--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Apr. 9, 2024-- A [newly published report](#) reveals the state of product development, examining the forces that shape how we bring new products to market today and the challenges on the horizon. Protolabs surveyed more than 700 engineers, designers, and product developers across all product development stages, from early prototyping to ongoing production. The industries represented are on the frontline of innovation, including aerospace, medical devices, consumer electronics, and more.

“As a manufacturer serving customers from prototyping to production, we have a front row seat to watch companies bring products to market faster than ever and lend our capabilities as they overcome myriad challenges,” Protolabs Strategic Growth Officer Luca Mazzei said. “While those challenges are evolving, we are excited to assist product developers as they continue to push the pace of innovation beyond what most thought possible.”

Respondents made clear today’s product development process is driven by a need for speed. About half (53%) report they are developing products faster than ever, but more than 80% reported they are looking for ways to be even faster. About two-thirds (65%) cite competition as the primary motivating force. Time-related constraints were mentioned far more than any other challenge influencing product development during the prototyping stage. Quality rose to the top once a product moves to ongoing production.

Survey respondents expect to slowly close the door on pandemic-related product development challenges, namely material shortages and supply chain disruption. Nearly 70% of respondents reported that material shortages had a significant effect on meeting late prototyping goals during the last year. When asked if material shortages would have the same impact over the next five years, only 33% predicted they would. Similarly, 74% of respondents reported supply chain disruption affected ongoing production in the last year; only 44% predicted it would have an impact over the next five years. The declining trend was prevalent across all development stages for both issues.

Meanwhile, the state of the economy is expected to remain a challenge over the next five years, especially during late development stages—61% and 64% responded this would be an issue for late prototyping and ongoing production, respectively.

Those surveyed also detailed what factors would (or would not) affect how long it takes to develop products over the next five years, citing the following:

- Rising customer demands will have the largest impact, according to 78% of respondents across all development stages.
- Labor and workforce developments such as labor shortages and the skills gap will continue to present challenges (65% of respondents).
- Only 35% said artificial intelligence would influence the speed of product development over the next five years.
- Only 37% expect environmental goals/sustainability to affect future development time.

### About Us

Protolabs is the fastest and most comprehensive digital manufacturing service in the world. Our digital factories produce low-volume parts in days while [Protolabs Network](#) unlocks advanced capabilities and volume pricing through its highly vetted manufacturing partners. The result? One manufacturing source—from prototyping to production—for product developers engineers, and supply chain teams across the globe. See what's next at [protolabs.com](https://www.protolabs.com).

View source version on [businesswire.com](https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20240409070008/en/): <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20240409070008/en/>

### Media Contact

Protolabs  
Brent Renneke, 763-479-7704  
Marketing Communications Manager  
[brent.renneke@protolabs.com](mailto:brent.renneke@protolabs.com)

**Investor Relations Contact**

Protolabs

Ryan Johnsrud, 612-225-4873

Manager, Investor Relations and FP&A

[ryan.johnsrud@protolabs.com](mailto:ryan.johnsrud@protolabs.com)

Source: Protolabs