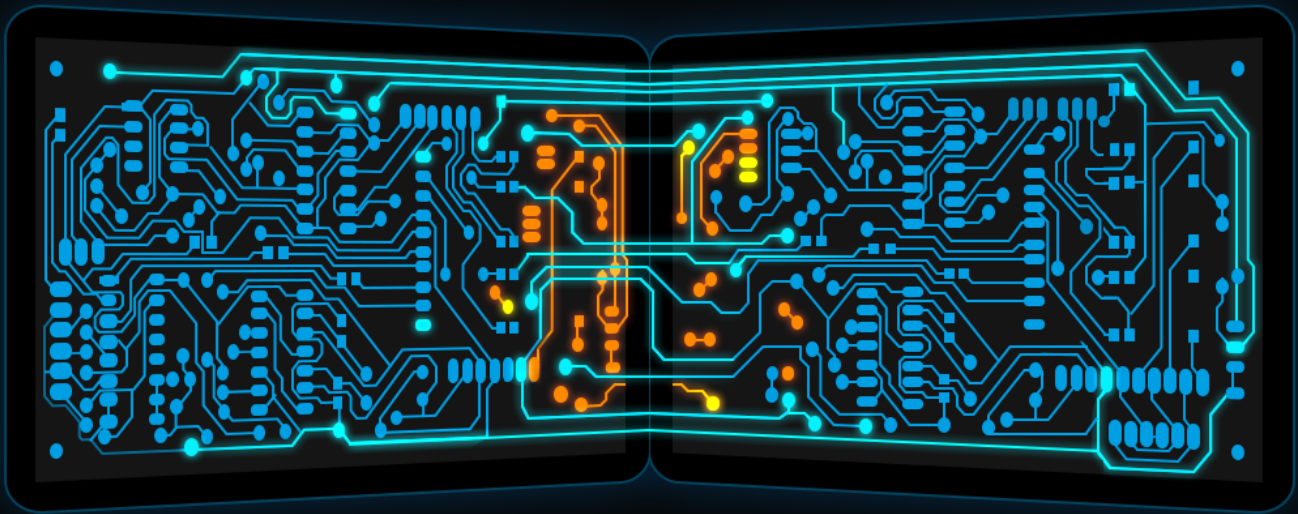# Time Saving Tips and Tricks in Altium Designer®

Part 2: PCB Design Environment Migration

Pierre-Marie Meyitang

Application Engineer

INTRODUCTION

A quick assessment of desktop applications reveals that user data often does not get backed up and stored in a uniform manner. A designer's worst fear, right? This pattern is more apparent in complex applications, where the location of such user data is not very clear. Users of EDA software face the same problem where they find it hard to migrate EDA software core data from one computer to another, running the risk of production time—or worse, loss of data Part two of our time-saving tricks and tips paper will guide you in using Altium Designer® to successfully back up and streamline the migration of EDA core data from one computer to another, saving you time and worry.

HURDLES OF PCB DESIGN ENVIRONMENT MIGRATION

Typically, if a designer's work computer fails, it is easy for them to recover project data by re-opening backed-up copies, provided they successfully reinstalled and reconfigured their EDA software's core files. Software core files can include anything that stores parameters about the user's EDA environmental configuration—custom shortcuts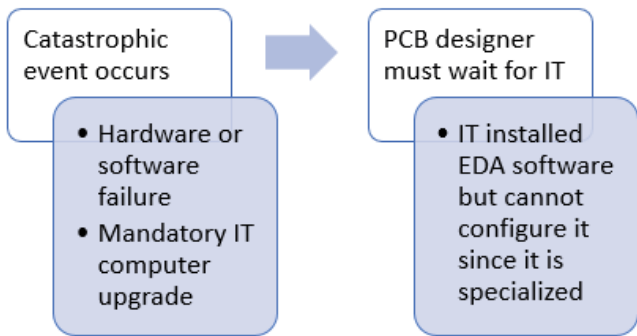, subversion repository configurations, workspace configuration, mapped file paths and network share configurations that are internal to the software. A major obstacle in a designer's work cycle might be if an event such as hard disk failure occurs, which would force users to reconfigure their PCB design environment from scratch. It would also cause a considerable time sink if not dealt with accordingly.

Figure 1: High-level overview of typical hurdles when going through IT to recover EDA software settings after a PC crash.

IT departments typically only know enough to install the EDA software, while further configuration is left up to users. Most EDA companies currently facilitate reinstallation of their software on a freshly reinstated operating system; however, the focus on core file recovery is close to nonexistent. Savvy users can track down the correct operating system registry files and folders to migrate, but others have to depend on their IT department's schedule to get them back up and running. Given that IT departments' response time increases as a function of company size, one can see the potential for delayed product launches due to PCB designers wasting time reconfiguring their software.

STREAMLINING THE MIGRATION OF ALTIUM DESIGNER TO ANOTHER COMPUTER

Microsoft Windows® installer of Altium Designer provides a wizard that can be completed in four to five mouse clicks. The installer can also be simultaneously deployed to many computers by IT departments. In addition to providing flexible installation options, Altium Designer also comes built in with a one-button core file backup and restore solution. A typical core file recovery procedure for a user of Altium Designer would be as follows:

1. Install **Altium Designer**
2. Go to: **DXP»Preferences**
3. As shown in Figure 2 below, click the **Load** button and select the appropriate data source.
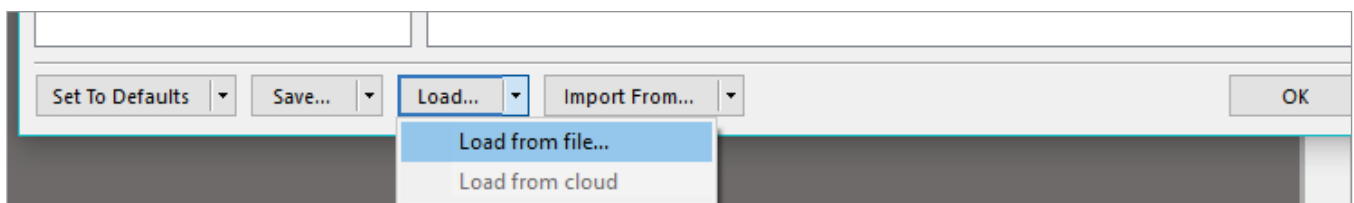

Figure 2: Preview of DXP preferences load options within Altium Designer 13 and up.

Altium.

The backup procedure would be similar to the restoration procedure, except you would click the **Save** button instead of Load. Altium Designer can also save and restore DXP preferences to the cloud simply by logging into the software with Altium Live credentials. However, cloud backup does not include menu customizations, nor is it as robust as saving to a file.

CONCLUSION

With the right software coupled with some simple planning, a lot of time can be saved when a system recovery is needed. PCB designers are used to having easy methods of backing up their project data. Given its unified design environment, Altium Designer allows PCB designers to migrate and recover their workspace parameters with just a few mouse clicks. Since users don't need to worry about manually copying registry settings from one PC to the other, not only is the initial barrier lowered, but product development schedules also become less likely to change since users have more power during the recovery process. Part 3 of this paper will focus on high-level tips and tricks that new and current users can use to increase efficiency and productivity throughout their workflow.

USEFUL LINKS

- **Altium Designer Free Trial:**
  www.altium.com/free-trial

Altium.