



What We've Learned In 70 Years of Manufacturing Parts ... and What Buyers May Like to Know, Too.

When a Company has the ability to look back over 70 years, noticing the major changes that have taken place, along with a multitude of subtle differences; in the final analysis, what appears to bubble to the top is not all that surprising.

There is something comforting about that.

Admittedly, this White Paper has a bit of "grey matter" in it. Meaning, what you are about to read is based upon one company's journey. The content certainly has some bias that way. Nonetheless, the areas of most interest to our readers, especially those who are contemplating a relationship with a company who has the ability to anticipate customer needs best, then come through on-time and on-budget, may well be of most benefit. Yet, even those who are similar in scope and offering, may enjoy doing "comparison shopping" noting what is similar, as well as, what is different; but more importantly, what may be anticipated and pitfalls to watch-out for. After all, just look what has happened to the part manufacturing business within a very short 70 years.

It was tool and die, hand-drilling, welding, carving and manual laboring using often rudimentary make-shift tools and measured for accuracy by manual means. It was the talent of the operator's eye-hand-foot

coordination and more scrap than final product. It was often hot, dirty, smoky, polluted and had various low-end reputations attached. It was not easy and often dangerous work.

In the early 1940's, when WWII was looming, production-inducing techniques were beginning to take a front-seat. Innovation was enhanced by need, speed became a priority. The first waves of streamlining efforts to eliminate production-steps using new manufacturing techniques were introduced with more automated machine tools, yet still before anything was aided by a computer.



It Sounds and Looks Like Innovation

And even then, from the first sound of a hammer on a piece of iron to the final hum of an electric drill motor, nothing happened without understanding what the customer needed, what the part was intended to do, and how accurate it was made from a hand drawing. If the customer's needs were met, all was right in the world. When a good job was done, parts were delivered when promised and performed well in it's final assembly; the customer arrived home happy. Unfortunately, that did not happen very often. It was always the goal, but all too often, the processes and abilities seemed deficient to customer need. Manufacturers were consistently being asked to do more, with greater accuracy, higher rates of on-time delivery and less cost. It was a constant challenge and manufacturing techniques had to change to meet new engineering innovations. Sound familiar? The patterns and requirements surrounding greater effectiveness appear to be a consistent theme throughout time.

So, perhaps one of the bigger lessons learned over the years is to try and stay current with innovation. In the 1950's and 60's, the world began taking notice of the American industrial surge. The incredible, pace-setting innovation of Henry Ford's assembly line began to employ 'automation', as did most everything else that was being manufactured. IBM and like-minded companies began testing computer-assisted-automation techniques and the world took notice. Manufacturing customers did, too.



Let's Find New Ways to Actually Satisfy Our Customer's Needs

Innovators of their time began showing their wares at tradeshows and world fairs. Production techniques were being tested with greater successes and by the 70's there were more machine shops becoming automated than ever before. Employee safety grew into OSHA, Quality Standardization grew into ISO and other customer-driven manufacturing programs were created to meet greater demand.

Now would be a great time to share the next bit of learned awareness. That being, try to anticipate the needs of your customer by finding ways to uncover them and become your own leader of innovation.

This does not necessarily mean one must strive to invent 3D Printing, innovation leadership can take on many faces. Trying to save time in the manufacturing process while never sacrificing quality-levels may be a great place to begin. For example, we've known for some time that our particular set of customers would benefit by keeping quoting, designing, process engineering, programming, fixture-making, production and quality control along with most assembly and shipping all under one roof, over buying these services outside; for our customers, that would be a huge leg-up. That is awareness based on customer need--our particular customer-base. Yours may be different. But the benefits, in our case, far exceed doing it any other way; at least for now. Yet, we are open to change, again, based on the customer's future requirements. Innovation leadership can happen anywhere and at any time and is easily shown and proven. Just talk with your customers.

This is Why We Trust You

Which brings us to the next very important lesson-learned...and it is somewhat involved, so for the purposes of this White Paper, we will call it "Creating, Building, Protecting and Promoting Your Reputation".

In a recent, quite informally-executed poll, we began asking our customers and others in our industry via Associations and the like, "When you think of our Company, what comes to mind first?" The overwhelming response was one word, "quality". While we are humbled by this response, it's actually not a surprise. Over the years, we have tried to enhance the levels of our quality and the standards we operate within, over and over again. We decided years ago, if any customer would look upon us as a Company where their project would be handled with the utmost care, be planned and built with the greatest attention to detail and have the best chance at a successful outcome... that is the place we wish to be. Granted, we've had 70 years to build that reputation, but the lesson surrounds starting something, then doing what it takes to build its awareness and eventual acceptance within your industry seems paramount.

What do you want your past, current and future customers to think about when your Company is mentioned? If you have not decided yet, decide now. Then promote it, talk about it, do whatever you can to enhance it and build your reputation. Also appearing inside this area of awareness, resides overt attention to all things concerning the needs of the customer. For many years, the arena surrounding "Customer Service" has been challenged. As companies find ways to eliminate costs, all too often elements of customer care and attention are sacrificed. Do not allow this to

happen. Honesty, transparency, integrity built upon open communication channels throughout your organization are all distinctly important traits to protect; paying close attention to your customer will build trust. And, when you have the trust of a customer, and you perform through your earned reputation, amazingly solid relationships can be built and you will have reliable, ongoing business. That is powerful and a big lesson-learned.

Of course, over 70 years in manufacturing, we have learned many things and often, the hard way. But, if asked to try and whittle it down to the 3 most important, while attempting a summary of this White Paper, may we offer this...

- Try to stay current with innovation, employ it where you see it fits best and use the future to your advantage.
- Try to anticipate the needs of your customer, find ways to uncover those needs and become the leader of fulfilling their future.
- Create, build, protect and promote your reputation; earn and value your customer's trust.

Manufacturing will most certainly look very different in the 2080's, 70 years from now. But, what we've learned most over the past 70, will likely have a good chance at being very similar well into the future...and yes, there's something quite comforting about that.

