



Top 5 Areas You May Want Covered When Considering Your Next Contract Manufacturing Partner

There are Contract Manufacturing Companies all over the world vying for business from OEM's looking for the best manufacturing companies to complete their parts, components, assemblies and specific requirements. How these OEM's make their decisions vary greatly when considering specific needs to get their work done right, on-time and with what are often called "best-practices" which can sometimes result in significant cost savings.

There are many areas to consider before making that leap.

This WHITE PAPER attempts to outline 5 of the most important areas of consideration. It is in no way meant to be an answer for every OEM. Rather, look upon this information as a guideline for a greater chance at success. In other words, if your Contract Manufacturing Company meets these requirements, you are most likely on your way to making a better decision over choosing a company that falls short.

The 5 top areas of consideration are in no particular order of importance, they are all equal considerations.

#1: CAPABILITY

This is a fairly common theme of Contract Manufacturers trying to communicate their worthiness over others. However, if the company you are considering partnering with has limited capability both in terms of equipment and professional knowledge, most likely the job results may fall short, as well. What this can mean to the OEM may result in your Contract Manufacturer needing to utilize more "outside assistance" from other companies they partner with to fulfill their customer's need. This is not necessarily a bad road to travel; however, having the vast majority of capability under one-roof is a better bet to reaching your goals faster and will allow for a more streamlined production process plan.

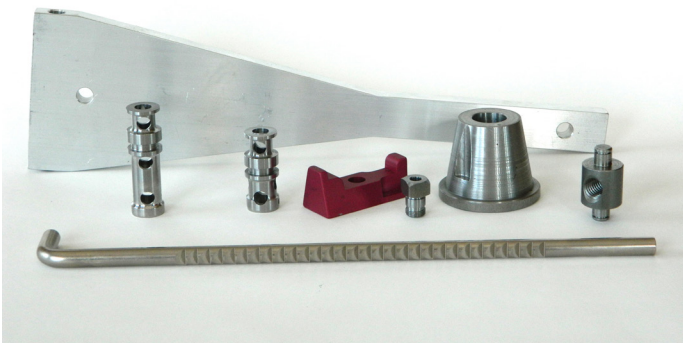


#2: A ROBUST QUALITY INITIATIVE

Over the years, Contract Manufacturing in the United States has allowed for a much greater emphasis on various Quality initiatives. A current ISO Certification proves that a manufacturer has done its due-diligence in conforming and placing specific Quality efficiencies in-place. It means their processes are controlled, documented and they can serve a purpose that goes beyond any checks and balances put in place over a company who is not ISO Certified.

A Contract Manufacturer with its own proven quality methodologies, processes that can easily be shared with any potential customer is nearly necessary for gaining a better understanding and acceptance that the end result will be as close to any specific requirement outlined on an initial plan as possible.

Quality in manufacturing has come a long, placing greater meaning in many aspects of the manufacturing process. It can include anything from Safety Programs to high-end Inspection Equipment, from work-in-process checks to CAD programming abilities, from final inspection techniques to robust delivery and inventory options. Quality Planning and purposeful processing is imperative when making certain your next Contract Manufacturing Partner can perform at the level your work requires.



#3: DESIGN FOR MANUFACTURABILITY (DFM)

Creating the most optimal plan, taking into account every possible process step, weighing each variable against another to be sure the final production process plan will be the “best” in order to conserve time and save on your investment; that is what Design for Manufacturability can accomplish and it can be a vitally important consideration. This is an area where many Contract Manufacturing Companies simply fall short. Within the studies surrounding Design for Manufacturability, a myriad of considerations happen. Ultimately, based upon the initial drawings, the DFM outcomes address everything from the material used to the desired delivery schedule and most every process-point in-between. Most work in the DFM study is done up-front, even before the always important prototyping stage. Contract Manufacturers well-versed in CAD/CAM systems can identify areas of possible trouble within a product sketch or supplied drawing. It is in this phase where true DFM is most employed. Finding ways to optimize the overall design to compliment capability and the ultimate desired outcomes can assist in streamlining the entire production process while not sacrificing a part, component or assembly’s efficacy. In many cases, the DFM process studies can be a specific enhancement tool while providing documented ways to save precious time-to-market and overall pricing schedules.

#4: CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION

One would think, in today’s world, with the myriad of options we have to send and receive messaging, the aspects of Customer Communication would be non-existent in terms of anything lacking. But, considering the manner in which Contract Manufacturers often get so involved in their own day-to-day events, even performing extremely well in uncovering process determinations, and planning, and inspection, and delivery requirements; why so often does the customer seem the last to know what is going on with their project? Lately, the word “transparency”

is being used more often. There are good reasons for this. One of the most important surrounds how manufacturers have found, when they keep their customers completely “in the loop”, even down to the detail of details, their degree of success with that customer is far greater over only communicating when they are asked, or worse yet, only when problems arise. Many Contract Manufacturing Companies now have ways customers can virtually see where their projects are in production, in real-time. Also, it does not hurt to have a good relationship with a dedicated Project Manager and the Sales Manager. Contract Manufacturers should be performing for each customer as a TEAM and every team member should be able to openly communicate with any customer and be able to discuss that customer’s project in its most current place in the production cycle. This kind of open, honest, “transparent” communication tends to breed trust. Trust tends to breed repeated business.

#5: ON-TIME DELIVERY

When a Contract Manufacturer measures their effectiveness in meeting or beating scheduled delivery dates, then, over time, can show those documented stats to any customer, that is a worthy tool. OEM’s are often under the perils of time; time-to-market, time to production, time to enhance levels of trust for their customers, as well. On-time delivery rates that meet or show trends to beat national stats can greatly serve to explain how and why certain Contract Manufacturers

have their act together and most likely perform within certain guidelines to minimize problems. After all, it’s in the stumbles along the production pathway where the possibility arises of not meeting the promised delivery date.

OEM’s do not want to hear that. They want to know their projects are moving along the process smoothly, as planned, and will deliver on-time, period.

EPILOGUE

Again, this List of 5 in no way means to appear definitive, rather, allow us to label it “a good start”. We will end this WHITE PAPER with a few other areas you may want to consider when choosing your next Contract Manufacturing partner.

Look into the professional strengths and experience levels of the personnel you’ll be working with, find and read their customer testimonials, are they well-versed in working with various materials, do several documented inventory options exist, how long has the company been in business, do they tend to upgrade their equipment often enough to keep up with technology, do they have a dedicated Production Management Team, and finally, can you sense a positive, forward-thinking and trust-building repore’ with the people. It may sound like a small thing, but great business relationships usually make for an even greater chance at mutual success.

