

How to Improve Service Quality of Fastener Traders

by Ivan Lee



20 years ago when I worked for a steel company, I often heard from the colleagues in the sales department that “the top guideline of sales is the fact that clients are always right”. They said if you followed the mindset while dealing with clients’ complaints or requests for indemnity, you could end up solving most of the cases with only half the effort. Indeed, now is the era of “quality first”, but on second thought, the question you’ll find is how on earth clients could always and invariably be right. In the perspective of factories, I suppose the phrase should be “Standing by quality is always right”. On

the other hand, here I am talking about improving the service quality of fastener traders, and in their perspective I think the phrase should be “Giving clients the service they want is always right”. Unlike factories selling quality, trading companies sell services. Below I will look at how traders can internally improve themselves, and I will point out some advice for your reference.

① Believe in Your Profession. Be Confident of Your Factory’s Quality

“Never doubt the person you hire, and never hire the person you doubt” is a good old saying from the ancient Chinese. We can apply the same idea in selecting suppliers. Traders and factories have their respective professions. You should select your suitable factories with your own profession. The good thing about traders is that they can say yes or no to factories depending on the team’s evaluation rather than personal preference.

There are a few rules of thumb in selecting factories. I strongly recommend the following guidelines for your supplier evaluation checklist:

- Product quality. Is it good or not?
- Observe the factory's attitude with clients while they place orders or cancel orders.
- Is the factory highly cooperative? Does it deliver goods on time and is it willing to transfer cargo at short notice?
- Is the factory willing to cooperate in goods examination?
- How does the factory react when a client returns goods or lodges a complaint?

Once you have selected a factory, you have to have faith in its quality. Well, of course, even Homer nods. Human errors might exist even in the best system. In quality control we use the Seven Basic Tools of Quality (1. Check Sheet; 2. Flow Chart; 3. Scatter Diagram; 4. Pareto Chart; 5. Cause-and-effect Diagram; 6. Histogram; 7. Control Chart) to address quality issues. The same holds true with solving the business running of a company to reach the perfect state. To me personally, showing "respect for profession" is a fundamental virtue in this precisely subcategorized modern society. I think faith comes from profession. Your partner factory can give you in return not just the praises and recognition from clients, but also the long-standing friendship and partnership.

② Keep Improving Your Professional Knowledge. Provide Proper Training to New Employees

Last month I attended Mr. Ckdon Chang's (from MIRDC) training course titled "Use the Seven Basic Tools of Quality to Analyze and Solve QC Problems in the Fastener Industry". On the one hand the boss seemed to have lost the money for a day's salary, but on the other hand he gained the heart of an employee, recognition from the industry, and free promotion. We all take a short rest so that we can go farther later, and that is why we take a vacation or corporate incentive tour. As the saying goes, when one wave leaves, another succeeds; the pupil surpasses the master. Although I have been in this industry for two to three decades, if I don't keep improving my professional knowledge, I may have been bygone at the front wave and replaced by the new generation. What about the

new employees? According to the senior vice president of 104 Jobbank, 36 out of 100 novices may leave their jobs within 3 months, and the first month is in particular the most risky period. There are three must-dos for novices before they can work in their positions longer. That is being a team player, having that gut to take the responsibility, and accomplishing the mission quickly. Accordingly, a company should offer novices internal training that provides: 1. Knowledge of the company and vertical structure via the personnel or related department; 2. Knowledge of the products via cross-learning in the company's website and real-life courses; 3. Knowledge of the manufacturing process and product applications via factory tours and case study on client complaints; 4. Knowledge of purchase orders and regulations thereof via department managers' irregular education.

I don't think novices have the right to choose what they want to do at will because they are new to the workplace. The right attitude for them is to ask whatever they do not know, learn whatever they can, show their ambition, take on and finish the project



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on their own, and quickly build up good impression.

③ Give Support & Encouragement to QC Department to Retain Top-notch Talents

A decade ago a foreign company set up a branch in Taiwan, but it took a full year to just find the right one to fill in the position of lab manager. Everyone knows that quality is what a company can live on, but what you may not know is that it takes at least 5 years to develop an excellent QC team with both mature knowledge and QC inspection techniques. The process includes real-life practice and machine operation training, product knowledge courses, manufacturing procedure and material analysis courses. The team must be able to resolve and improve problems using the Seven Basic Tools of Quality, and suggest the corresponding international regulations to understand the requirements when facing

quality problems. When a client lodges a complaint or indemnity, the team must be humble enough to accept and give an explanation, and have the courage to take responsibility. If your company happens to have a QC team as such, I believe you will sleep very well at night and never have to worry about clients' indemnity.

No pains, no gains. Here is an advice for company owners. It is best to invest in your QC team on your own. Once the team is developed they will become a precious momentum for stable company growth. As your company grows, do not forget to give support and encouragement so that you retain top talents.

④ Have Enough Inspection Equipment and Tools to Improve Service Quality

It is the same good old idea: One must have good tools in order to do a good job. Don't think that it is enough to just

have a trader send two goods inspectors every day to the factories for you. Does it ever occur to you that an armless soldier cannot even go to war? Inspectors represent their companies' image. They are also the "walking advertisements" for the companies; therefore it is worth investing in them properly. Not just the inspection equipment, but professional knowledge exchange and relationship buildup also significantly improve the company's image. On the battlefield we would say, "Know thy enemy". The purpose of examining goods is to gain the upper hand of shipment quality before clients receive the goods. Traders are not factories, so by examining goods they can know the quality of the batch and make sure clients will receive the correct goods.

To further monitor and improve quality, many traders are setting up labs. This opens up a new page for the service quality of Taiwanese traders. Consequently, even if the processing plants at the end of the supply chain do not have enough QC equipment, traders can assist in inspection and deliver the goods smoothly.

5 Proper Job Rotation Can Spice up Employees' Jobs and Add Anticipation for the Future

To senior employees, repetitive jobs can inevitably make them drowsy. Some of them who have stayed really long enough may just talk the talk but not walk the walk, and even act like a "Dutch Uncle" and do only what they want to or just leave all their jobs to others. They are not just a pain in the butt to colleagues, but a relationship destroyer at the end of the day as well. If someone pays you to do the work, you don't always opt for the easiest work, and you don't do this paid job to just live by the day. The biggest taboo is passing the buck around. Beware if something like this causes a problem. Getting scolding emails from clients is just one thing, but the bigger problem is that the bad mood may in the end make you so tired of your job.

According to Cheers Magazine, salary men usually feel tired of their jobs for the first round after working for 3 to 5 years. The main cause of that is the fact that they feel the bad days in their jobs. If the problem is not resolved at the time it occurs, it will accumulate with other problems and give rise to tiredness that makes a person flee away from everything. In this situation, the owner can consider proper job rotation to spice up employees' jobs and give them new missions without sacrificing the company's business running. Accordingly, employees are less prone to getting tired of the jobs and will have anticipation for the future.

Last Words

At the end of this article I would like to quote the words of TELSAs CEO and Solar City Chairman Elon Musk from the book—He is Playing Hard! "Iron Man" Elon Musk Ten Game-changing Capabilities (literal translation of the original Chinese book title). He says the rule of thumb for success in a new market is deliberate planning, bold innovation, and intensive execution. He also says the purpose of earning is just to sustain the business of the company but this is not the most important. He says the

top target is to make a great product and satisfy clients' demands.

Speaking of the know-how in improving the service quality of fastener traders, indeed, I think client satisfaction is both a primary and ultimate target. Elon Musk, born on June 28 of 1971, becomes the multi-billionaire in America at the age of 43, and takes part in so many game-changing businesses. There may be few big money makers in the world, but they are not so rare, either. Those truly qualified to be dubbed the game changers are really the rarest of the rare. We often say that your attitude determines your social position. Although we may not be in Elon Musk's position, what we can learn from him is his living attitude. To hosts' questions he always answers, "I'm quite confident that the primary means of power generation will be solar," or "I'm extremely confident that solar energy will be at least a plurality of power, and most likely a majority, and I predict it will be a plurality in less than 20 years. I made that bet with someone." I hope you reading this article will think more and be confident when you do your job or talk in your workplace. ■