In Pursuit of Excellence... Nadcap Suppliers

Nadcap Suppliers explain what they have done to continually improve their operations in pursuit of excellence.

Eric Jacklin, President of F. M. Callahan & Son Inc.

One of the best ways we can support our customers is by continually improving our operations. A little while ago, we installed an epoxy floor in our facility. As well as making it easier to maintain a clean environment - which is critical with our work - because of the improved visibility, staff morale went up because they were proud to work in a professional, clean place, and of course it looks good when customers and auditors visit.

Re-investing back in your company is so important: to stay current with aerospace technology, you have to invest in your production floor, that’s where it counts.

Of course, none of that matters unless you develop strong working relationships with your customers, and open communication is the best way to achieve that. Recently we made a part for which we’d tried to tighten the tolerances and had fallout. The percentage was really low but we wanted to bring it down even further for our customer. To achieve this, we met, brainstormed and used all sorts of problem solving tools.

Through open discussion and great communication, we figured out the root cause: the rack design. Our solution was to re-engineer the rack to hold the part without making any marks.

Working with our clients to find solutions that work for them helped us both achieve excellence together.

Paul Evans, Group Quality Manager at James Fisher Inspection and Measurement Services

Active participation starts at the shop floor end, not with bureaucrats in suits.

Change can only start if everyone buys into it, by encouraging all staff to actively participate in collaborative groups around in the work place and not just senior managers. It encourages continual improvement of the management system and is a key tool in achieving business excellence. A business that encourages staff input at all levels stand a better chance of survival in the current economic climate. We have taken this proactive approach and have created continual improvement groups in all the key business areas with a cross representation from all levels. This ensures success and smooth roll out of new initiatives and ideas.

David Jones Senior Quality Manager at NTP Nex-Tech Processing

As a Chemical Processor we often have the question, “What is it that you do?” We have started giving Processing 101 classes to our customers. We will bring in our Customers Quality and Procurement and give them a 1-3 hour tour/class in the basics of processing. This has significantly helped in our flow-down issues as well as reduced our rejection rates at the customers significantly.
Contract review / flow-down remains a hot topic for many suppliers, but little proactivity at the Prime Contractor level in seeking a common ground. The truth is, Special Process Suppliers are left holding the bag regardless of where responsibility lies within the supply chain. Until flow down is embraced from the onset as being the primary contributor of missed deliveries, poor quality, and excessive costs, (because of expedites), little will change.

The good news is Special Processors can capitalize on the problem and take a proactive stance with the goal of being a customer advocate. We invest heavily in up-front resources, creatively proceeding as many tiers up the supply chain until we find the answers we need. We’re not circumventing our customer, but adding value in digging for information for questions they don’t know too ask. That’s being an advocate for your customer in the true spirit of “Customer Service.” Many have even expressed it being a value-added benefit in doing business with us. Essentially, we’re training the supply chain to mandate good flow-down practices at their level. After a short time, they’re on board and the relationship grows.

Each organization has to find their own way in accomplishing these objectives. But you have to be creative, persistent and drive a hard line. In our organization, we look at broken flow-down as an opportunity to add value and build stronger relationships.

What Do Other People Say?

“Be a yardstick of quality. Some people aren’t used to an environment where excellence is expected.”
Steve Jobs, American Inventor

“There are no speed limits on the road to excellence.”
David W. Johnson, former US politician

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.”
Aristotle, Greek Philosopher

“The sad truth is that excellence makes people nervous.”
Shana Alexander, American journalist

“Strive for excellence, not perfection.”
H. Jackson Brown Jr., American author

“If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in little matters. Excellence is not an exception, it is a prevailing attitude.”
Colin Powell, former US Secretary of State

“The noblest search is the search for excellence.”
Lyndon B. Johnson, former US President