

11 Things to Keep in Mind When Qualifying a Contract Manufacturer

Designing a product for manufacturing can be daunting enough, but locating and qualifying the right contract manufacturer . . . well, it's certainly no walk on the manufacturing floor! However, it's an essential part of the productization process. We've created a list of 11 items that we believe are crucial to address when qualifying your contract manufacturer. Disagree or have a horror story? Share it with us!

1. Align your product, vendors and contract manufacturers to the optimum logistics as much as possible, i.e. Shipping, NAFTA, Customs
2. Understand CM annual volume 'sweet spot' or minimum production expectations
3. Understand CM tier level, including revenue expectations
4. Is CAPEX structure available for equipment purchase? Is the local workforce available to support expansion?
5. Regulatory—Know the laws and industry standards you're trying to sell into
6. Ask about Quality Assurance systems—Understand your acronym soup and industry expectations: ISO, QMS, PPAP, DFX, ITAR, ITIL
7. Understand the qualification process for their for their Approved Vendor List—How are vendors chosen?
8. Tenure in business / were there any major changes recently? - staff, senior management, ownership, turnover?
9. Determine the ability to move or expand production into multiple facilities or other low cost global regions
10. Leverage the core competencies of your CM to fill any gaps in you own product supply chain
11. NPI structure—does the company work within their MRP and follow their own process?

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