Dr. Die Cast

Additive Manufacturing: When was the Last Time You Re-evaluated Your Perspective?

A few decades ago, a few zinc die casting companies shipped ready to install chrome plated castings to the automotive and appliance industry. Examples included spring loaded hood ornaments, emblems, inside and outside door handles, window cranks, instrument panel knobs, head light and tail light bezels, etc. Today many of these same components are delivered to the end users as "sub-assemblies." Plastic over-molding technology has been embraced by "lighting companies" that provide the entire integrated front and rear lighting assemblies.

Some still are comfortable with the idea that providing a machined casting is "additive manufacturing" I would challenge you to look deeper.

Many of our "Off-shore" competitors are providing "turn-key" solutions. There are numerous examples of a single contact supplier that provides not only a machined or painted die casting but a finished, ready to install or market product. A few examples are electrical fittings that are packaged in plastic pouches that are displayed on hooks at the lumber and hardware stores, musical accessories shrink packaged and ready to sell. Are you prepared to update your marketing to compete in the new environment?

Getting started: How can you exceed your customers initial request? Do you stop reading the request for quote "as written." Consider looking beyond the initial quote to the final needs of your customer. For example, how is this casting component used? What is the next step, is the customer currently completing the next steps in-house or do they utilize another outside source? Would they be willing to delegate those responsibilities to you in order to be able to concentrate on other projects or product lines? While it is impossible to know why a customer would be happy to outsource to you, one thing is for sure. If you fail to ask, the answer will always be no.

What are some services that you could provide? CNC or dedicated high speed machining. Finishing such as polish and buff, plating, painting or powder coating or screen printing. Sub-assembling mating components to create a ready to assemble or market product. Display packaging, warehousing, distribution, import/exporting, labeling, product testing/certification, etc.

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