

10 Ways to Get BETTER Parts for Metal Doors

by
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The race is on—and it's going to be a long-distance test for everyone in the metal door business—manufacturers, suppliers, distributors and retailers alike. It may be one of the most daunting tests facing the industry in many years. It's a marathon, and the powerhouse competitor is China.

We can feel China's impact at every turn, whether it's rising steel prices, material availability, or imported product that can flood the market. Although changing worldwide economic conditions could ameliorate the challenge, simply hoping for the best won't solve the problem.

What to look for in a supplier is changing. It's important to know how to source cost-effective metal door parts quickly, efficiently and cost effectively in the U.S.

Here are guidelines for making prudent parts-buying decisions. In other words, here is what to look for in a parts supplier:

1. Expect consistent quality. The bane of any door manufacturer's existence is inconsistent parts quality. A brand's value rests in the performance of the smallest

part, not just the door itself. When that part fails to perform, the whole unit fails and so does the door manufacturer. That's when competitors get a foot in the door.

What to look for in a parts supplier? The answer is simple: *guaranteed consistency*. The ability to deliver parts isn't at issue. It's a track record of consistent products that counts.

This is why customers value Dayton's ISO 9001:2000 certification. Quality isn't something the company just talks about—it's built into the total manufacturing process from ordering through delivery.

2. Technical expertise. Getting what you ask for and getting what best serves your requirements can be two different things. While getting consistent quality parts delivered on time at the right price is essential, it's the baseline, the starting point. But meeting expectations isn't enough today.

What best serves your requirements takes it to another level. What's needed is technical expertise that is capable of offering more efficient and effective solutions. That's the only way to produce an overall door that continues to meet customer expectations.

Any door manufacturer should look for and expect a high level of technical expertise from a parts supplier.

3. State-of-the-art product equipment. Almost all of Dayton's door component machinery is less than five years old, including a new dedicated hinge reinforcement line put in place this last shutdown. This is equipment that not only delivers quality goods, but also can

Price isn't everything

It isn't just the metal industry that's facing aggressive competition from overseas. Take the experience of a large U.S. animal feed company. It found a bag manufacturer in China that could produce full color graphics on a waterproof material and ship the bags to an Eastern U.S. port at a fraction of the price that a U.S. bag company could print full color paper bags.

The company jumped at the opportunity to improve the presentation of its products. But after air freighting a pallet of the new bags to the U.S., the company discovered the manufacturer had changed the specifications just enough so that the feed mill's filling and sewing equipment couldn't accommodate the attractive—but now useless—bags.

How long would it take to make the change and get delivery? At least 16 weeks, they were told. The feed company then had to place an emergency order for the old paper bags. Deliveries of the company's new feed were held up for a month. On top of that, advertising that touted the "new, waterproof bags" had to be changed. The result: disaster.

The communication issue contributed to the problem. Because of the time differential, the only way to communicate with the Chinese bag company was by email. Trying to "discuss" the issue was problematic at best and certainly uncertain. The back-and-forth went on for days, leaving the feed company questioning the wisdom of its decision to go so far for something so essential.

be counted on for *consistent* production. Old equipment may be good, but it's not always reliable. No one wants to wait while a manufacturer finds parts for obsolete equipment!

4. Strategic in-house capabilities.

Customers today expect consistent quality, on-time delivery and the ability of a supplier to solve problems.

It takes more than even the best manufacturing capabilities to meet this level of challenges. For example, Dayton Industries' core competencies include building our own job-specific tappers and dies. Using the latest technology and drawing on a reservoir of experience and expertise, we can meet our customers' quality requirements, delivery schedules and pricing expectations.

5. A commitment to continuous improvement.

While it may be good enough for now, it won't be good enough tomorrow. The fatal tendency in any industry, and particularly manufacturing, is to upgrade only when necessary or when pressured to do so. It's called the "dragged yelling and screaming" approach to change. You want suppliers that have built continuous improvement into their processes—so that system changes are ongoing.

6. A single source supplier for a variety of parts.

This is one more way for door manufacturers to simplify their business operations. Dealing with a supplier that can manufacture a wide range of parts translates into savings of time and money at every point in the process from design and ordering to communication, billing and delivery.

Hinge reinforcements are an example. Dayton has the capability to deliver an *unlimited variety* of hinge reinforcements, as well as any other part a metal door manufacturer requires.

7. An order process that creates confidence.

An order confirmation process has one objective: *to deliver the right product at the right time, consistently.* No pun intended when we say that's a

tall order! Without timely communication, one crisis follows another. You will be faced with problems, excuses and delays unless you can be sure the moment you place an order that the results will be what you expect.

8. Ability to meet special situations.

While getting regular orders filled is essential, being able to count on a supplier for special situations is increasingly valuable.

Dayton Industries, for example, has a broad selection of what can be called standard weld projection patterns, as any door manufacturer would expect. But what if a customer has a "non-standard" need? What happens then? It's not a problem for Dayton customers. They know Dayton's ability to produce special projection layouts in-house saves time and money.

9. Flexible production capabilities.

Realistically, every metal door manufacturer has crises that demand fast action. That's the nature of the business and it's to be expected. However, survival today requires the ability to deal with such situations without delay.

"How fast can I get it?" The answer to that question requires what we call at Dayton "flexible production scheduling." Translated, this means we have a range of production capabilities that can help us deliver in emergencies—without sidetracking someone else's orders.

10. Reliability.

Of all the essentials, this one is currently more important than ever—access to metal. When we don't have to wait for a delivery, neither do our customers. Because of Dayton's position in the marketplace, our metal supply relationships are deep. We buy millions of pounds of metal each year and our suppliers count on us as much as we count on them.

Equally as important for every door manufacturer is a parts supplier's inventory strategy. Our 90% plus year-in-and-year-out on-time delivery track record is no accident. It comes from maintaining a consistent inventory.

Taken together, these ten ways for getting better metal door parts are

facets of Dayton's overall philosophy of doing business. Customers can count on them whenever they place an order.

There are other facets that deserve attention. Having the logistical expertise to minimize shipping costs can be a cost-saving issue, as is the ability to offer custom labeling and packaging. They only make the point even sharper: it's the combination of capabilities and expertise that produces the right results.

Yes, the race is on. Whether it's competition from elsewhere in the world or down the street, the ability to deliver on your promises is what keeps a company in the winner's circle.

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