

9 Expectations to Have of Your Suppliers

Medical device manufacturers no longer exist at the design level in a silo. Successful OEMs look to their supply partners for expertise and design advice. This article outlines nine factors that device makers should expect from any company they are looking to partner with as a part of their supply chain.

By Luis Tiszone, Director Life Sciences,
Trelleborg Sealing Solutions

In recent years, countless management experts and analysts have touted the benefits that medical device manufacturers of all sizes can realize by establishing “partnerships” with their suppliers. Forward-thinking suppliers understand how they can support the medical device manufacturing industry through these partnerships.

When specifying seals, bearings, silicone tubing, extruded profiles, over-molded assemblies, sanitary gaskets, or LIM (liquid injection molding) products for medical device applications, specific areas should be evaluated when selecting a supplier. While these product areas represent the expertise of Trelleborg (www.tss.trelleborg.com), the following list offers expectations that are relevant when selecting suppliers from any technology space.

1. Innovation: What improvements to medical devices or components can be made through the contribution of product design, technology, or ideas? In many instances, suppliers can help medical device manufacturers by collaborating through shoulder-to-shoulder engineering to develop advanced designs and materials.

2. Advanced Delivery Systems: What reductions in total product cost can be achieved? This can be done either through streamlining of work processes (inventory management, new product design, scheduling, etc.) or replacement of costly components with less expensive yet still effective components.

3. Local Support and Global Reach: A supplier that pulls from its global

knowledge base while providing local support for an optimized customer experience.

4. Commitment to Quality: Not surprisingly, product quality is regarded as an essential factor in selecting a supplier. Specifics in this area include a supplier’s use of technology and better engineering design methods, ISO certifications, approach to problem solving, preventative maintenance, and methods of equipment calibration. It is important to have quality control people on the supplier’s team to realistically deliver control standards and methods of measuring quality.

5. Bring a TVO Approach: TVO (total value of ownership) is another huge factor for businesses that need to create streamlined processes. It encompasses the additional added value a customer attains above and beyond the actual product, as evident from advanced delivery programs, shoulder-to-shoulder design collaboration, leveraging of R&D expertise, and initiatives and special packaging services, to name just a few.

6. Communication: Suppliers should maintain a policy of open communication. When changes are required in engineering or design, this strategy allows for a more collaborative and streamlined process, impacting all touch points of the project.

7. Flexibility and Special Services: Many medical device manufacturers express appreciation for suppliers that take extra measures to satisfy their customers. These “perks” can range from after-hours accessibility to inventory management to offering technical training.

8. Market Knowledge: Suppliers with extensive knowledge of market condi-



ConMed’s Hall 50 powered surgical instruments use advanced tri-seal technology and benefit from Trelleborg Sealing Solutions’ engineering approach.

tions and mastery of contemporary issues impacting your business can be immensely valuable in helping companies chart a course to sustained financial success.

9. Financial Stability: Since medical device manufacturers have strict compliance and regulations to consider, they typically prefer to select and partner with suppliers that are financially stable. Such arrangements not only convey security, but they allow companies to learn about one another and gain