



Dr. Die Cast



Can't Someone Come Up With Some New Problems to Solve?

Don't forget the basics. Educating our customers.

Most of my former employers became clients after I started consulting. One morning as we were going through a daily production review meeting, I stopped and looked around the table at the usual list of suspects and said, "Isn't anyone going to come up with some new problems or defects?" Sometimes it seems we're in "Groundhog Day," where we re-live the same problems over and over again. Certainly they have different names, part numbers and have moved to a different machine, operator or shift, but ultimately, the problems are the same. The common defects of porosity, miss-fill or distortion or some variation of the above abound.

Please don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying that we as an industry are stuck in some time warp unable or unwilling to improve. We have improved in response to the demands of our customers for increasingly higher quality die castings. There are

companies delivering castings at PPM levels that would have been thought impossible only a few years ago. Our customer's quality standards constantly increase, as they should. After all, we have yet to make perfect castings, at least in unlimited quantities at an economical cost.

What I am saying is that many of the castings that are labeled as defective today would have been deemed acceptable a few years ago. The levels of porosity or finish at which we operate today are much higher standards than provided in previous years, but the definition or description remains unchanged, therefore the comment, "They're the same defect."

What is our response? As an industry, we need to educate our customers to the benefits but also the limitations of our processes. We oversell our companies when we fail to thoroughly educate our customers on the benefits but also the limitations and costs involved in meeting their specifications. It is not unusual for a design engi-

neer to place a specification on a print that has little to do with the fit and function of the component. However that same feature may add significant cost to the tooling and/or casting. One example of overdesigning a casting would have added approximately \$25,000 to the cost of the tooling. I asked the designer, "Is that feature really worth \$25,000?" His initial answer was that it was absolutely necessary. However, two weeks later the feature had disappeared from the design. Had we not brought it to his attention it would have remained on the print unchanged and pushed him over his budget and possibly killed the project for everyone. I find that most people are grateful for the input and education.

When is the last time you helped your customer reduce their cost and design better castings? Hopefully it was this week.

Until next issue, have a great summer.



Who's Dr. Die Cast?

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