



An Integrated Approach to Fastener Supply

INTRODUCTION

In today's supply-constricted environment, assuring a reliable supply of fasteners for your operation has become an increasingly significant challenge. Purchasing fasteners is no longer strictly about a negotiated cost/unit. Instead, it is a complex process involving several considerations, including product availability, certifications and quality processes required, value-added services, and more.

The bottom line is that an integrated approach to fastener supply is more important than ever to optimize an organization's efficiency and productivity.

This whitepaper will address the many issues associated with an integrated fastener supply program and provide possible solutions for elevating its effectiveness and efficiency.

An analysis of any fastener supply program can begin by addressing the following questions:

- Are you experiencing reliability issues with your fastener supply or feel there is room for improvement?
- How and by whom will the fasteners you need be sourced? What mix of fasteners will be needed?
- Are there any specific requirements associated with the fasteners you are sourcing, including materials, coatings, platings, regulations, certifications, or testing processes?
- Will you require related services, such as Vendor-Managed Inventory (VMI) or fastener kitting?
- Could you benefit from your fastener supplier being able to provide various secondary processing services such as painting, coating, drilling, etc. of fasteners?
- Do you have any specific administrative requirements that could impact your sourcing of fasteners?

SOURCING CONSIDERATIONS

Often, a productive first step in upgrading your fastener sourcing effort is to determine areas of possible improvement. Areas that you might consider include:

- Speed and reliability of delivery
- Fastener quality and performance, including an analysis of fastener failure
- Fastener installation issues
- The administration of the purchasing/invoicing process
- Concerns about pricing

What Fasteners Are Needed, and How Will They Be Sourced?

A critical step in this process is determining whether there is a history of fastener failures and analyzing the cause of those failures. This analysis may change the specifications of the fasteners you are sourcing.

Another factor is your estimated volume of fasteners you will require and whether you have a long-term or short-term need for them. Along with this information, you must determine the mix of fastener types you will need—by size, materials, and any special coating requirements. Your required delivery intervals should also be a factor.

Finally, there is also the question of buying directly from a manufacturer or through a distributor.

This question can be addressed from several perspectives:

- Buying directly from a fastener manufacturer might provide a measure of cost savings, and you may be able to access some engineering support. However, many fastener manufacturers are overseas, and their level of customer support is often lacking. In addition, ensuring a reliable supply of fasteners may require you to keep more product on hand due to longer lead times
- If you require several different types of fasteners, this will probably involve several manufacturers. Dealing with multiple fastener manufacturers could present several problems from both a logistical and administrative perspective



What Requirements Should Be Considered

Another consideration is how the fasteners will be used. There are a number of factors that might have an impact on your selection of fasteners. For instance, some government-funded or military contracts require all or some domestic content. U.S.-made fasteners can contribute to meeting that requirement.

Other considerations might include:

- Special materials and coatings required
- Compliance with various regulations and certifications, including ISO 9001, ISO/IEC 17025, API, Mil-I-45208, ANSI/ASME, and ASTM
- Quality testing requirements using an A2LA-qualified or similar lab
- Fastening application conditions – weight, heat or cold, vibration, corrosive conditions, etc.
- Installation considerations – easy/tough to reach locations, tooling requirements, safety-related issues, and more

Related Supply Services Required

Given the critical nature of fastener supply to a wide range of OEM, construction, and maintenance/ repair applications, buyers often look for more than just a supply of fasteners. Instead, they also focus on an overall fastener supply solution developed in line with their unique operational requirements. Such a fastener supply solution might include some of the following value-added services:

- The application expertise provided by a fastener distributor or manufacturer can add to the value of their product. Top-level suppliers often provide experts who can help you select the most suitable fastener for the job from both a performance and cost perspective
- Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI) can assist a procurement group by maintaining fastener inventory at proper levels. If well-planned and implemented, this type of program will ensure that there is always a reliable supply of fasteners and related hardware without tying up an inordinate amount of money and storage space in excess inventory
- Kitting fasteners and related hardware can improve the efficiency of various manufacturing and construction processes by ensuring that all fasteners and hardware are always available when needed. This service significantly reduces or eliminates the time personnel spend searching for individual fasteners or related hardware



Secondary Processing Services

If your company is consistently performing additional work on the hardware you buy, you may be procuring the wrong product or using the wrong supplier. By sourcing the correct, ready-to-use products, you can free up valuable warehouse space and reallocate employees to more productive tasks within your facility. Optimizing your procurement process not only improves efficiency but also optimizes overall operations.



For instance, you may currently be painting or coating fasteners after you have received them or adding head markings and lot information. Also, fasteners and other related hardware often must be drilled or modified. You can handle these secondary processing steps yourself, tying up facility and personnel resources, or your supplier can often provide these processes as a service.

Administrative and Accounting Requirements

The paperwork associated with fastener procurement may be another consideration when deciding on a supplier. An easy-to-use ordering and invoicing system can ensure a smooth and seamless fastener-supply process and eliminate some of the administrative burdens of both procurement and accounting departments.

As detailed above, an integrated fastener sourcing effort can add to the efficiency and productivity of one's operation, providing several favorable outcomes—dependable delivery, consistently reliable fastener quality, compliance with various certifications and regulations, VMI and kitting

CONCLUSION

services, and an efficient administrative component.

Driving all of these considerations is the supplier's willingness to commit the time and effort to work with you to provide a fastener supply program that best meets the requirements of your application, efficiently and cost-effectively.

ABOUT ALL-PRO FASTENERS

All-Pro Fasteners supplies high-quality fastener products to meet a number of industrial, manufacturing, and fabrication applications. The company offers a broad range of supply solutions – global sourcing, manufacturing, customized inventory management, kitting custom shipping, and more — all designed to better meet customer’s fastening requirements.



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