

bar

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# SELLING GOOD

# SERVICE



## Summit Steel adds a personal dynamic to each customer transaction

BY GRETCHEN SALOIS

**R**eeling in customer interest, receiving an order and delivering that order on time mark the bare minimum of a successful transaction, at least for Summit Steel Corp., Chagrin Falls, Ohio. The alloy steel and carbon steel bar provider has served the metalworking industry since 1985. Throughout that time, the company has emphasized longevity and the importance of staying power. By working closely with customers, Summit Steel attempts to differentiate itself from an array of competitors, assuring customers they are making a wise decision when choosing Summit.

"We invest significant time and effort in developing meaningful business relationships with our customers," says Ross Bushman, Summit Steel president. "Doing

so allows us to help our customers solve general and specific manufacturing issues. By offering solutions to engineering, storage or other details involved in making a particular project viable and profitable, we become an integral part of the manufacturing process." According to Bushman, Summit Steel provides raw material to general and specialty machine shops, the forging industry, the screw machine products industry and a number of other clients who manufacture parts fashioned from steel in diverse industries such as oil, solar and wind energy; transportation; agriculture; aerospace and a variety of military and commercial applications.

### A collaborative effort

A North American door manufacturer needed to improve its product. "Summit Steel provides steel reinforcement on our

**Summit Steel provides materials for alternative energy industries, including solar and wind energy, as well as alloy steel and carbon steel bars.**

larger doors, a component we need for our door structure," says the company's plant manager. This particular facility employs advanced manufacturing methods, using computer systems to produce products.

"While there are other manufacturers in close proximity to our facility, we went with Summit because of their service and quality," he says. Summit's ability to meet and hold dimensional requirements for the company's doors is a "critical issue."

"The door components have to hold a tight tolerance within the set range of dimensions, otherwise it could result in a

defective door," he adds. What might be viewed as a minor component to the overall door could determine whether the door meets requirements or is a defective unit.

A North American company that designs and manufactures cultivators employed a number of steps to have pins purchased, cut, heat-treated and welded. Instead, the company's fabrication supervisor sought a better way. Summit proposed a simpler approach after learning the North American company used a multistep process for the pins.

Summit suggested the company weld and send pins out to be plated. Previously, the company had to cut the pins and then send them to a heat treater, the fabrication supervisor says. Not only was Summit able to expedite the North American company's process, but it also offered shorter lead times in receiving the final product. "When we were looking at companies to help us, we found a lot of the suppliers had high lead times getting the finished product," he says. "Summit was able to get it to us faster."

#### Customized approach

"Originally, the door reinforcement mechanism wasn't part of the structure of the door," the plant manager says. "We figured out this improvement through research and development. Summit Steel came in and helped us establish what we could add to our door. They supplemented what they had available." By tweaking what Summit had available, the company was able to offer this North American door manufacturer a solution to improve the door's structure.

This type of cooperation played a key role in the development of this company's product. "A door is usually 1½ inch thick; snaking, crook or bow using a steel component within the door is going to telegraph through the surface or cause other detrimental issues," he adds, noting when working with certain types of doors, if there is a steel component inside, the steel will not bend easily. If the steel component is not straight, the edge will sit so the outline will be visible through the skin of the door. "The feasibility to construct the door with steel wasn't there initially," he says. Prior to this structural improve-

Summit also provides motor vehicle materials for parts and accessories.



**IN** MANUFACTURING YOU HAVE TO CONTINUOUSLY WORK ON COST-REDUCTION IDEAS WHILE IMPROVING PRODUCTION METHODS.

ment, the company did not have steel in its doors. "There was an area to improve our product and further illustrate our commitment to quality," he adds, which Summit helped provide.

Although there are other competitors in the area, the plant manager says that in addition to price point, which is "one key to stay competitive in the market," Summit's ability to deliver its products on time while reacting and working together makes it an ideal choice for the company's needs. "They're a good vendor. They supply the material ordered and deliver it when it's scheduled to deliver," he says. "Those are keys to keeping manufacturing costs down and staying lean in a competitive market."

"Summit Steel's pricing is pretty reasonable," the fabrication supervisor adds. "Right now, customer service stands out as we look at other pins we need to make in the future." He notes because of the successful coupling in the past, this North American company is likely to work with Summit Steel on future endeavors. "We have a contact person who looks after us. He e-mails me with updates," he says.

"Offering a variety of value-added processes and services to basic steel prod-

ucts is what sets us apart from the competition," Bushman says, adding processing services are performed through an approved network of suppliers and includes bar sawing, both piece and production; annealing, including lamellar pearlite, spheroidized, stress relieved, heat treating, normalizing, machine straightening, cold drawing, turning and polishing; turned, ground and polished shafting and rough turning. "We also tailor stocking programs for our customers in order to minimize their cash outlay, conserve their manufacturing space and logistics—making sure material is delivered as promised," he says.

"I think in manufacturing you have to continuously work on cost-reduction ideas while improving production methods," the North American plant manager says. "I believe Summit is on board with that. Summit has been quick to resolve any quality issues, and that's what you expect as a customer. Our customers expect the same from us." ■

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