

# The Supplier-Customer Interface

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“We changed the \_\_\_\_\_”. Have you ever heard a post-facto comment like that from a supplier about any material or process they used to make a product that performed poorly or not at all in the system you built using it?

That should NEVER EVER happen! A strong supplier-customer interface would not only prevent such occurrences but would greatly increase confidence in both procured product quality and the quality of the product items built with it.

A robust supplier-customer interface, like a marriage, requires communication. Fundamentally, the communication needs to be between the supplier’s engineers building the supplier’s product and the customer’s engineers building the customer’s product. The communication must be frequent, regularly reviewing product specifications, lot-to-lot manufacturing data (control charts wherever possible) and ongoing quality/reliability testing data.

The goal is to build understanding and trust where the supplier’s people and the customer’s people know each other and have a stake in each other’s success. This talk reviews some specifics of how to build mutual trust and understanding at the supplier-customer interface, so you never have to hear, “We changed the \_\_\_\_\_”.