

MAKING IT PERSONAL



Sales manager, Charcroft Electronics, Debbie Rowland

While some distributors rely on automated processes to minimise errors, some are taking a more hands-on approach to quality assurance, explains sales manager at Charcroft Electronics, Debbie Rowland

The relationship between original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and distribution is shifting, as one particular new acronym highlights: namely the DSQR or designated supplier quality representative.

Distribution has always played a key role in ensuring the accuracy of shipments made to OEMs, but the role of the DSQR takes the distributor's input beyond the conventional quality assurance (QA) boundaries. The DSQR is not just a quality manager; he or she is a named individual, employed by the distributor, but trained, approved and working on behalf of the OEM, to check each shipment before it leaves the distributor's warehouse.

Checking details

For the DSQR, 'checking every detail' means exactly that: personally checking every single detail. It means physically checking the picked parts against the part numbers and the date codes shown on

the manufacturer's paperwork; then it means checking the parts against the OEM's order and drawing; and checking the delivery note and certificate of conformance (CofC) to make sure that every single detail is identical.

Then the DSQR goes further by checking that the date code is still valid on each batch of parts. For Cenelec electronic components committee (CECC)-release parts, this means checking that the date codes are within the two-year validity period. The CECC release number is also checked to ensure that it is still current and that it has not been superseded by a different version or release. The DSQR will document and report these and any other discrepancies to the OEM in writing and record the OEM's written response.

When the DSQR is certain that the shipment and documentation meet every criteria exactly, he or she will stamp the authorisation and add, not just a printed signature, but personally sign the authorisation to despatch the shipment.

Of course, the DSQR is the last person in a delivery process which begins with an enquiry from the OEM. So, by extending the DSQR's training to a nominated sales contact and a back-up sales contact, the same level of customer-specific knowledge can be applied throughout the enquiry process.

Eliminating delays

This knowledge-based approach can mean that if there is any doubt about the lead-time for one or more parts on an enquiry, the sales contact can recommend an alternative part with a higher specification and shorter lead-time. Working with the DSQR and the OEM early in the enquiry process means that the salesperson can get the change documented and authorised before it becomes a shipping delay.

In an industry in which the distribution process is becoming increasingly automated, the introduction of a DSQR programme underlines the knowledge-based trust which exists between some OEMs and their distributor. Of course, this approach to quality does not work for distributors who ship millions of commodity parts to equally high-volume OEMs. But for industries which operate on lower volumes and have significantly higher quality demands, a designated supplier quality representative, who fully understands the products that they are checking, can enable the OEM to shift the burden of responsibility for quality back to a trusted supplier.

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