

# Thoughts on the Marketing of Quality Castings

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## ABSTRACT

This paper begins with the observation that quality is a term frequently found in marketing and advertising material, but its definition is elusive for many, leading to vague promises and messages of little attractive power. As important as quality is to foundry products and services, it is under-utilized as an approach to distinguish brand identity and enterprise capability. Sharpened messages with greater content regarding quality, as they arise from an effective definition, can be of great benefit to foundry sales. The author, with over 40 years of quality experience, identifies four steps foundries can take with their marketing and promotional materials that could better utilize quality messaging.

**Keywords:** marketing, quality, foundry, casting

## INTRODUCTION

The foundry is no different from any other manufacturing enterprise in at least one important aspect: it requires customers to survive. Efforts to retain customers and the pursuit of new customers should certainly characterize every foundry, whether they have a marketing department or not. This is not a new concern to the foundry; almost 70 years ago the prestigious Hoyt Memorial Lecture of 1956 was devoted to the marketing of castings.<sup>1</sup>

Massari's lecture in 1956 and the more recent 2014 Hoyt Lecture by Hayrynen were not focused on the need for marketing (that was assumed) but rather how marketing should be carried out to be most effective.<sup>2</sup>

Effectiveness in marketing, specifically in communications to prospective customers to entice them to further interact with the foundry and purchase products, has been heavily focused on declarations of product quality. Evidence for this can be obtained by a survey of advertisements placed in *Casting Source* by foundries. This periodical is a resource published by American Foundry Society specifically to connect casting purchasers to foundries. In a tabulation of a year's worth of such advertisements, over 88% used the word "quality" to describe their products (Volumes 20 – 26).

Product quality declarations are an interesting focus for such advertising as it seems true that customers today assume that products will be delivered conforming to their

requirements and where they are not, full liability for delivered nonconformity is transferred to the supplier foundry.

It is also interesting to note that much effort has been made to align foundry operations to accord with formal quality management systems such as ISO 9001 or market-specific QMS criteria such as the automotive IATF 16949 or the aerospace AS 9100.<sup>3-6</sup> In the same survey conducted by the author almost no mention (less than 5%) of the quality management system was made in advertisements in *Casting Source*.

It is meaningful then to consider how quality should be utilized in marketing appeals to customers. Is it good and necessary to affirm that a foundry produces conforming products? Of what value is quality management system conformity to prospective customers? What place does quality have in making effective promotions to foundry customers?

This paper considers first the definition of marketing and quality, which then leads to a discussion of what customers are seeking from quality. This background permits a review of recommended and not recommended approaches to advertising a foundry's quality. The paper closes with a series of four summary points (steps) that provide guidance to effective advertising of quality.

## A DEFINITION OF MARKETING

It is important that in describing how quality relates to marketing that these terms be defined. This section provides a description of marketing, including the relevant process associated with marketing.

Marketing might be most succinctly defined as the process used to know and understand the customer. It includes the process of identifying potential customers and getting them interested in a company's products or services.<sup>7</sup> This definition thus distinguishes marketing from sales: marketing efforts interact with customers to understand their needs and knowledgeably attract them to the foundry where salespeople can work out the details in a technical manner.<sup>8</sup>

This definition requires the marketing and sales representatives of the foundry to be expert in foundry processes, capabilities, materials and processes. Massari in his 1956 lecture boldly declared, "Selling castings is an

engineering job.” M.T. Rowley, former VP of Technology at American Foundry Society made the same point in his Hoyt Memorial Lecture given 30 years after Massari, “Tomorrow’s casting sales and marketing personnel must have extensive technical training, enabling them to determine, understand and evaluate specific customer requirements regarding casting integrity and performance.”<sup>9</sup>

Advertising, of course, is one strategy that marketing personnel utilize to attract potential customers. The means of attraction (advertising) must therefore be designed to illustrate both a careful understanding of that which customers need and are looking for and the capabilities of the foundry.

Advertising is complicated by the pragmatic concern that the foundry’s messaging is not performed in a vacuum. There are many voices of competitors and alternative solutions to customers’ needs. Gibson, Warda and Stoffberg criticized foundry marketing efforts for failing to have a marketing approach that addressed both customer needs and competitive solutions of new materials and processes.<sup>10</sup> Their recommendations involved intensive technical evaluation and education of marketing and sales personnel and the formation of cooperative industry groups they referred to as Focused Market Development Groups, an early concept now at least partially realized in AFS technical committee work.

Marketing thus requires a thorough understanding of customer needs and the communications necessary to interest prospective customers in the foundry where they will not be disappointed by the products and services offered. It remains to be seen how this work connects with quality and quality management systems.

## A DEFINITION OF QUALITY

One of the challenges associated with speaking about quality is that while there is a unanimous agreement that quality is desirable, when pressed to define exactly what is meant by quality, there is a considerable divergence of opinion and a good degree of uncertainty about exactly what is meant.

Some of the challenge in establishing a definition for quality arise because there are at least two different perspectives that must be considered. Quality must be defined in the vocabulary of the producer to be useful within the context of the foundry. Quality processes and outputs cannot be measured or achieved without an effective definition. Equally important is the definition of quality from the perspective of the customer – what are they seeking from the foundry’s products and services? Obviously, these perspectives cannot be contradictory, but how must they relate to one another?

It makes sense to turn to the professional society for quality for clarity in this definition. The American Society for Quality Control was founded in 1946 and later renamed simply American Society for Quality (ASQ).<sup>11</sup>

Several attempts have been made and published through ASQ to provide a universal definition, one that might consider the perspectives of supplier and customer and provide some sense of how one might achieve quality.<sup>12-15</sup>

There are a few elements that a definition must include based on a summary of the last 60 years of effort documented in ASQ-related sources. The goal of quality is customer satisfaction. In order to make customers happy, producers must make concerted efforts to understand both their needs and expectations. Beyond this knowledge, producers must translate these needs and expectations into product, process and service requirements that will yield those features and benefits the customer is seeking. In addition, it is recognized that producers must provide these features and benefits at a cost that represents value to the potential buyer.

A definition that this author has adopted and that derives from the foregoing factors is “quality is conformance to requirements at a cost that the customer perceives as value.”<sup>16</sup> This definition is suitable for foundries if they recognize that the requirements that must be met do not exclusively derive from the foundry itself but from identified customer needs. It must also be acknowledged that these needs are not limited to product specifications that might be found on a drawing or in a specification but include all aspects of the business relationship.

It should be recognized that in defining quality in this way achievement of quality relies on a continual understanding of what customers need and want. This inextricably links quality achievement with successful marketing because we defined marketing as obtaining a thorough understanding of customer needs. It is from this starting point that the requirements for quality are determined. Success in quality, therefore, is alignment of foundry process and product requirements with identified customer needs. Jack Steele, for whom AFS’ Excellence in Marketing Award is named, recognized this when he defined marketing as “A business system or attitude of working for the greatest good of both the foundry and customer.”<sup>17</sup>

## WHAT CUSTOMERS WANT

Happily, thus far all foundry customers are human beings despite the growth of artificial intelligence in business communications. As such, there are a few non-negotiables to customer satisfaction that must be noted first. They are applicable to every other aspect of the customer relationship.

All customers expect open and honest communication. This means that commitments are kept, and risks are identified up front. When things go awry every effort is made to get back on track. Communications about problems are clear, to the point and continuous with new developments. Respect for individuals is demonstrated by politeness and recognizing the value of people's time. Listening for the purpose of understanding is fundamental to effective communication. These ethical considerations form the basis of an effective relationship where trust between the parties can develop.<sup>18</sup>

### PRODUCT CONFORMITY

Upon delivery of product, absolute conformity to product specifications is always required. Realistically, absolute conformity (zero defects) is not always achieved. Customer satisfaction is inversely proportional to the incidence rate of defects found in delivered product. Some customers may acknowledge that perfection is not regularly attainable, nonetheless, satisfaction increases with a reduction in nonconforming parts. In many markets the customer's level of discomfort with a given defect level is formed on the basis of a relative comparison between one supplier and the next. To be the preferred supplier, target and maintain zero parts per million defective on a continuous basis. Foundries that settle for some "reasonable" level of outgoing defects as acceptable will find that competitors will eventually understand what quality level they must deliver to win.

### PRODUCT RELIABILITY AND INTEGRITY

It might appear that the customer has responsibility for specifying product requirements sufficiently to meet the need for reliability of the function of the part and its operational integrity in service. Yet even if the customer bears that responsibility formally, customer dissatisfaction will still result from a failure of the part during processing and subsequent assembly and use. Foundries that fully grasp the concept of quality and its relationship to customer satisfaction understand that it is always incumbent upon the supplier to deliver a product that will continually satisfy the customer. This means in the development process anticipated customer processing, testing, use and potential abuse must be considered as challenges the part must be designed to meet.

A feasibility assessment must be carried out for each new part or application to ensure that the castings produced will meet the customer's needs through subsequent processing such as machining or painting or leak checking. Functional and structural parts must be able to withstand expected loading, including impact and fatigue.

Customer satisfaction is severely harmed by disruptions in customer processing, assembly and use. Warranty charges, even if borne by the customer, do not encourage continued use of an existing supplier.

### CONFIDENT DELIVERY

This section uses the heading "confident delivery" instead of the expected, "on-time delivery" because customers expect far more than simply getting their materials when they ordered them. Much like product conformity, customers have an expectation of 100% on time delivery performance from their suppliers. This means not only must parts not be delivered late, they also cannot be delivered early. Stock space, lot control and cash flow considerations, to name just a few, argue against customers' welcoming early deliveries.

On time delivery is about anticipation: about creating a high level of confidence in the customer that future orders will also be delivered on time. Creating this confidence is the result of a few concrete actions on the part of foundries. First, customers need to understand the time required from order to delivery for the foundry. Ideally, foundries ought to invite their customers to their facility to help them understand what happens when an order is placed. Purchase orders can then respect the lead time necessary. Of course, instant supply is the preferred approach, and this can be attained if the contractual agreement between the parties has provisions for the maintenance of a certain size inventory so that shipments can be made "from stock." While maintaining a finished goods inventory is impractical, lead time is an essential element that must be known by the customer.

Second, confidence is created by announcing shipments when they leave the dock so that the customer knows when product is on its way and its arrival time. This also simplifies operations at the customer so that scheduling of people and process resources can be available. The practice of issuing advanced shipping notifications or ASNs, is common in the automotive industry but is not typical for many foundries.

### PACKAGING/LABELING CONFORMITY

Making deliveries convenient for the customer is an important part of customer satisfaction. Castings may simply be shipped in a manner convenient for the foundry using packaging readily available to them. Asking the customer how they want parts packaged can be a differentiator with respect to customer care.

Consider a few aspects of this decision that can be meaningful for the customer:

- What protection from damage or corrosion is needed to preserve part integrity?
- How will the parts be handled upon receipt?
- What space constraints exist at the ship location?
- What level of digital scanning or digital inventory control is applicable?
- What will the customer do with the parts after processing? For example, will they be machined and repackaged to the assembly line?

- What will the customer do with the packaging after delivery? Recycle the dunnage? Return to the supplier? Put it in the landfill?
- What weight constraints might be relevant for lifting or transporting?
- What configuration of packaging best allows efficient containerization?

Customers are delighted to have suppliers that are sensitive to the challenges associated with their side of the supply chain. Asking about issues such as these can create further goodwill at the customer's plant. While the people at the plant may not be decision makers for future business, their commentary regarding a supplier's performance can be a decisive factor to a purchasing representative.

### CAPABLE DESIGN

Most customers are looking for foundries that not only can produce an existing part from an existing pattern or mold, but that can assist them in developing new parts either from scratch or to replace a weldment or other fabricated part. Convincing a customer that you can do the job is not accomplished by describing the software and hardware at your disposal for solidification modeling or finite element analysis. Capable design begins and ends with competent designers who have the experience, knowledge and communication skills necessary to apply foundry technology to a specific customer application.

This includes a demonstration that your design person or team understands:

- The foundry's process choices and their pros and cons.
- The foundry's materials and properties.
- Competitive processes and material choices.
- The function and demands on the part to be cast.
- The required material properties, internal integrity, surface finish and craftsmanship.
- The foundry's process capability to consistently deliver the needed properties, dimensional requirements, etc.
- The factors of cost associated with process and material choices.
- The effect of process and material choices on the lead time to first delivery of parts.

In short, design staff must work together to realize Jack Steele's view of marketing: the ability to create a joint solution that is good for both foundry and customer.

### FORWARD LOOKING COMMUNICATION

Customers are seeking suppliers that are interested in a long term relationship. The long term in this context means that the supplier is interested in linking its future to the future plans of the customer so that as the customer's needs change, the foundry can continue to meet those

needs. That requires a deliberate effort to understand the customer's business and its products as well as the market forces that will shape that business and its products going forward.<sup>19</sup>

Foundry management and those engaged in marketing must invest time in intentional effort to become very familiar with the demands and forces shaping the customer's market. This might be accomplished by a commitment to meet regularly with the customer's top management team. It certainly means being immersed in trade shows, professional societies and the literature of the market in which the customer operates. It means contributing ideas in that market and being recognized as a thought leader and a supporter of the success of that market. This is a long commitment that may not show observable results, but customers are looking for contributors to their success. Making contributions to the customer's market is an excellent start.

### RESPONSIVE CONCERN MANAGEMENT

It is the nature of reality that despite good planning and the best of intentions, problems will occur from time to time. Customers desire perfection but recognize that much can be learned about a supplier when a problem occurs. Customers want excellent service when problems occur. Foundries can deliver unexpected delight by handling a problem amazingly well and minimizing the impact of the problem to the customer. In addition, the foundry's analysis of the problem, its honesty about the shortfalls that led to the problem, and its creativity and energy in applying a countermeasure to correct the underlying cause can reveal areas of excellence otherwise unknown to the customer. These characteristics can help sell the foundry and its products.

Customers at the receiving end of problems want:

- To be heard and taken seriously.
- Acceptance and ownership of responsibility to make things right.
- To have ready access to a human who is empowered to help.
- Rapid short-term actions that isolate the problem and mitigate the consequences.
- Effective problem analysis that leads to a confirmed system-level root cause.
- Follow up contact and communication to confirm that measures taken were effective and to restore the relationship.

Standing by customers during difficulties—especially those caused by the foundry—reveals the heart and spirit of a company and their level of commitment. Those tasked with caring for customers as they have complaints and concerns can have a significant impact on customers, both positive and negative.

## ADVERTISING QUALITY TO CUSTOMERS

The field of advertising is broad and has several technical specialties that this paper is not intending to address. This paper is focused on the effort foundries can make to “sell” their quality, that is, to communicate through advertising that their organization is quality-minded and produces quality products. For an excellent overall description of advertising see Tellis’ work on effective advertising.<sup>20</sup>

### RECOMMENDED APPROACHES

In advertising there is a fundamental divide between messages that are considered “soft-sell” versus “hard-sell.” These might also be referred to as “emotional appeals” and those that are “rational appeals.”<sup>21,22</sup>

Soft-sell advertising uses images, perhaps not even of the product, and sends messages that associate the product with success or improved life conditions. They attempt to communicate that the purchase and use of this product (or service) will make the owner better in some way. Hard-sell advertising contains data, claims of merit for the product, touting features and benefits and the functional value of the product or service.

Emotional appeals rely on the message to link positive feelings to the product such as security, acceptance, joy or comfort. Rational appeals provide the basis for an argument that the product is best or relatively best suited to meet the needs of the buyer than the competition.

These categories of advertising approaches are not mutually exclusive: a given advertisement is likely to appeal to both feelings and facts. Both approaches must appeal to the concerns, requirements and needs of the potential purchaser and these will be humans that unavoidably mingle facts with feelings.

While most foundry and foundry product advertisements tend to incorporate hard-sell, rational approaches, emotional appeals are often in the background. Imagine an advertising image of a person sleeping in a bed (smiling) while wearing a hard hat. The tagline reads, “Our Plant Manager sleeps well at night.” In the copy content we find that XYZ Casting Mfg. Inc. has a 99.7% on time delivery rate as evaluated over the last five years. The hard-sell message that XYZ has the best delivery performance is linked to the security and comfort of knowing the castings ordered will be delivered without fail on time.

Foundries are best served by staying away from pure emotional, soft-sell approaches. The kind of quality customers are seeking has content that needs to be delivered. Ansari and Riase found that appeals that were customer-oriented, emphasizing the quality of products/services, were more effective at increasing the likelihood of a purchase.<sup>23</sup>

## RECOMMENDED CONTENT

Given the quality that is sought after by the customer, how should our messages, sent through advertising, be crafted? How can the foundry effectively represent itself as an organization that has the quality customers seek? Following are five content suggestions that may be incorporated into advertisements that may yield greater effectiveness.

### Case Studies

Advertisements that describe a real-world success story about how the foundry enabled a customer to have an excellent outcome can be highly effective. These stories provide an opportunity for the foundry to showcase its strengths and their ability to solve problems and/or innovate to achieve customer satisfaction. These can be “feel good” stories that have an emotional appeal in the background.

### Metrics

Advertisements that provide data are the epitome of the rational appeal and dare the prospective customer to compare the numbers to competitors. This kind of content can be attractively bold and confident simply because it invites comparisons. Numbers such as delivery performance, lead time to first delivered casting, warranty or returns PPM indicate the functionality of the quality system and the focus on customer-driven priorities.

### Team Competence

People are the core of the foundry and the only non-replicable aspect of an organization. Machines and layout, materials and processes can be bought and copied. The unique aspect of your organization is represented in the team of people that can solve customer problems and care for their needs. Describing the team experience, qualifications and other indications of competence can provide a strong impression to customers that their needs will be your priority.

### Customer Satisfaction

A specific kind of metric, specifically those that directly indicate customer satisfaction, can be effectively included in advertisements. These might include customer testimonials, announcements of customer awards, scorecard numbers or descriptions of the success of initial parts. This type of information allows the advertisement to direct customer’s attention to quality strengths that have been proven in real life, not merely claimed. Provided that the customers the foundry highlights are well known to be discerning and operate to the highest standards, such testimony can be compelling.

### Innovation and Continual Improvement

Top tier foundries are constantly working on improvement and are always developing new capabilities to satisfy the changing needs of its customers. Identifying those changes that bring new capabilities within an

advertisement can attract customers seeking that capability. They can also interest customers that want to find an agile, flexible and customer-motivated foundry to work with.

### NOT RECOMMENDED APPROACHES

Scrolling through advertisements in *Modern Casting* or *Casting Source* reveals a significant desire to associate a foundry with quality. Unfortunately, because of a misunderstanding of the meaning of quality and the kind of manifestations of quality customers seek, some advertisements may use the word quality but do not communicate effectively; they do not “sell quality” as it is needed by the customer.

#### Declarations

Many advertisements simply proclaim that their foundry produces quality products. The author’s father worked for many years for Zenith in Chicago at a plant that made television sets. At the time Zenith’s marketing message was “The quality goes in before the name goes on.” This was an effort to communicate to potential buyers that Zenith TVs had quality manufactured into the product and seeing the nameplate on the TV was adequate proof of quality. As catchy as that might have been as part of early TV commercials, it amounts to simply a declaration. Prospective customers need more than that – they need to understand what is intended by that quality. How does it help? How is it manifested? What will the customer obtain or experience differently as a result?

In most markets, as has already been noted above, product conformance to requirements is assumed; it is just getting what the customer paid for. In this sense product quality is expected; anything less is unacceptable. Boasting in an advertisement that your products meet all requirements is a very minimalistic achievement.

#### Inspection Capability and Methods

Other advertisements appear to operate under the assumption that quality means inspection and inspection effectiveness. Readers may remember the old commercial for Hanes underwear featuring a cross-looking, severe woman inspector who declared, “It doesn’t say Hanes until I say it says Hanes.” The message was clearly that their clothing was thoroughly inspected by someone with high standards, and one could trust that these articles would be satisfactory because Hanes would reject nonconforming articles without question. While some might think it was comforting to know they were putting on a garment that was carefully inspected for flaws, today we have a different perspective.

Such severe inspection is the result of having processes that produce defective units. Why can’t a higher rate of conforming parts be made? What does all this inspection cost? Isn’t this non-value-added work? Is this severe-looking inspector using criteria for acceptance or rejection

that align with company standards? Customer standards? Just her own standards?

Foundry examples of inspection quality-based messages include those with coordinate measuring machines in the background declaring they check every characteristic or have images of blueprints or inspection checklists in the advertisement with claims of product quality. Product quality is not fundamentally obtained by inspecting out substandard quality and customers today understand this well. Foundries do well to take note of this in their promotional messages.

#### Capacity

Press releases and advertisements announcing new lines and new construction that add capacity may have a use, but they do not promote the perception among customers that quality products will be (or are being) produced. Existing customers should be contacted directly regarding the availability of new capacity, a constraint that may have existed previously and has now been lifted. Prospective customers who read such messages may believe that the foundry is well funded, or skeptically, that the foundry has just gone into further capital debt and is desperate for more business. Trolling for business in this way is an invitation to quote on the basis of price/volume; perhaps the polar opposite to competing for business on the basis of quality.

### COMMENTS ON THE VALUE OF QUALITY CERTIFICATION

Foundries frequently mention the fact that they have earned quality management system certification to ISO 9001 or QMS sector-specific standards such as IATF 16949 or AS9100. It should be recognized that while these certifications represent an accomplishment by the foundry, they are viewed primarily as a “license” to do business within a certain market segment. They do not convey any special merit on their own in the eyes of customers.

Customers generally understand that certification itself provides no guarantee of quality performance or manufacturing process effectiveness. One might argue that the establishment of a QMS makes it more likely that processes are managed with customer requirements as vital inputs, in practice there are enough exceptions to largely negate the intrinsic value of certification as proof of product or design quality.

This is not an argument against the benefit of certification but rather a recognition that it takes much more than a certificate on the wall to convince a customer that their needs will be met on a consistent basis.

Indeed, the value of such certificates is determined by executive management and their attitude toward quality leadership and the true integration of ISO 9000 quality

principles into the business. This is difficult to communicate in advertisements but can be made evident in direct conversation with management.

## OVERVIEW

Foundries need to promote their existence and their capabilities to customers. It is mandatory that foundries market themselves. Part of the task of marketing is advertising, sending messages about the foundry in an effort to attract new customers. Customers are looking for “quality” suppliers of foundry products. Some of that which is included in the word “quality” has been described earlier.

This paper has also identified the type of approach and content that advertisement messages might include to be effective. Effectiveness here means sending a compelling message that the foundry under consideration has the needed characteristics to produce parts that conform and can design and develop products that will be fully satisfactory and provide reliable performance through any challenge from first parts through final warranty. One might ask if there is anything else beyond quality that would be a suitable basis for attracting customers? Ultimately there is only price. The alternatives that might come to mind such as fast response, reputation, expertise, range of products capable of being produced, time in business, etc. are merely characteristics of a statement regarding the quality of parts or services. Foundries competing solely on the basis of price are not sustainable. Firms whose sales are generated only on a price consideration are subject to every competing low-cost competitor and have zero goodwill or loyalty earned from the supply relationship. They are, in a sense, merely renting their customers.

It is important to recognize that the kind of marketing foundries must do, and the kind of customer awareness required demands a close relationship between quality, marketing and sales. Messages crafted to prospective customers must align with foundry capability and direction. Looking at this from another perspective, it does not make sense for foundries to improve upon capabilities that do not matter to the customer. Information must flow in both directions: quality staff must inform marketing staff what the foundry can do, and marketing staff must inform staff of what customers are looking for so that these capabilities can be developed through improvement projects. Sales staff are involved in both directions of communications as they strive to apply studies from satisfied customers that demonstrate you can get the job done.

foundry technology to the specifics of a customer’s needs. Many argue therefore that these three functions ought to be linked in very organic ways to ensure consistency.<sup>24-26</sup>

As one reflects on the marketing task and the communications sent out to prospective customers, an important caution emerges. How we represent our foundry must afford with reality. How the products provided align with their requirements will be judged severely. What was promised must be delivered in truth. Kopalle and Lehmann have performed research on the significance of initial product quality relative to advertising promises. They conclude that customer satisfaction is a function of the difference between experience and expectations.<sup>27</sup>

Foundries dare not overpromise and under-deliver by marketing capabilities it does not have. Should the contrast between the two be large, significant reputational harm may likely result. Foundry reputation is an important asset: a banner that is its own advertisement of the quality of the work performed by the foundry. Reputation has repeatedly been proven to correlate with business performance.<sup>28</sup> Foundry management will always do well if they determine what customers are looking for and provide it with authenticity and enthusiasm, learning from feedback.<sup>29</sup>

## CONCLUSION—FOUR POINTS TO REMEMBER

### POINT 1: BE REAL

Advertise with integrity and honesty. Do not overpromise and under-deliver. Sell what can be done and not that for which is merely hoped. Understand the capabilities of the process, both in production and in development. Strenuously avoid giving in to the temptation to compete with promises that cannot routinely be met just to match or exceed a competitor’s strengths. Instead, use the knowledge of the unique capabilities of your foundry to attract customers.

### POINT 2: ADVERTISE QUALITY APPLIED

Since quality is conformity to requirements, identify those places where conformity is rare or unusual or especially appreciated in the target industry or market. Communicate your capability or track record in that arena of quality. This might be rapid-time-to-market, surface finish, custom design, precise chemistry or properties control or anything that is attractive within the customer’s perspective. This is the time to share testimonials or case .

### POINT 3: ADVERTISE PREVENTION OVER DETECTION

Inspection processes are to be applied within the foundry with efficiency and effectiveness. They exist as an extra security blanket for characteristics that do not have proper process capability. They create additional confidence that conformity “out the door” will meet requirements. Unfortunately, advertising focus on inspection is misguided; it reminds customers that the production process is weak and needs a heavy filter to keep it from spilling nonconformity to their docks. Customers understand (or know from experience) that reliance on inspection is ultimately unreliable; spills will occur. Instead, focus on quality planning, on error proofing, on autonomous process controls that are designed to yield conformity. Promoting the ability to catch problems before they get to the customer sends the message that the foundry regularly creates problems and wastes money catching and correcting them. Instead, identify and promote in advertising trusted quality engineering and project management staff and processes that are engaged in planning and control to minimize or eliminate problems.

### POINT 4: ALIGN ADVERTISING WITH MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

As a prospective purchaser of foundry products one of the challenging assessments that must be made is around management. Buyers must determine whether management staff is committed to quality products and services, whether they will do the right things with nonconformity when it is discovered, and whether quality management is a mere banner or a lived philosophy of the business. Use advertising to share the story of the foundry’s uniqueness at the management level. Link the QMS to executive and plant management. Provide an explanation of what ISO 9001 certification means to the organization. Explain how it connects with the plans for foundry improvement projects and future direction. It is widely appreciated that effective quality systems are only possible with management support. Reveal that support in advertising messages.

Convincing a customer that a particular foundry is the right choice for a long-term relationship clearly does not simply rest on the merits of a great advertising campaign. It requires that trust be established between buyer and seller – trust that can be established by the foundry “walking the talk” offered in marketing and advertising communications. The four points above can provide guidance on how to attract interest which the foundry can support with customer visits and excellent delivered quality.

### AUTHOR’S NOTE

This paper is not intended to critique any specific foundry or foundry advertisement in any periodical. An effort was made to avoid using actual foundry advertisements or marketing materials as examples to prevent a prejudicial perspective of any foundry or its products.

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