



Tribar's patented multi-piece assembly process, replaced Ford's paint-over-chrome system with a molded part.

PROJECT DETAILS

Customer: Tribar Manufacturing

Application: Automotive Badging & Nameplates

Technology: Prototyping & Improved Assembly Process

Industry: Automotive

Location: Michigan

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INTRODUCTION

Tribar is a tier 1 supplier of injection molded parts, decorative applications and assemblies for the automotive, furniture and energy storage industries.

THE CHALLENGE

Operating out of a state-of-the-art 70,000 square foot design and manufacturing facility in Howell, Michigan, Tribar's one-stop services also include design, painting, chrome plating and electro-mechanical assembly of components.

However, before Tribar became a Tier 1 supplier to companies such as Ford and Chrysler they spent the first decade of their company history as a Tier 3 and then as a Tier 2 supplier. In those formative years, the company was producing pre-designed components for customers, according to Sandra Miller, Tribar's Product Development Manager. “Companies would give us the jobs to run with tooling built by them. But we weren't satisfied just making parts for other people,” said Miller. “We wanted to get into other areas including taking the whole project from design to development and manufacturing. And we wanted to be the first in the industry to come up with not only a better way of doing what we do, but with a continuous stream of new, innovative and breakthrough ideas.”

THE SOLUTION

How did Tribar meet the challenge of an evolving market place to reach their objective?

Their path to success is characterized by continuous improvement, rooted in Tribar's robust and incisive Tri-Part Mission Statement which can be condensed to three words. Baseline. Better. Best.

While in some companies the mission statement is foreign to the way they conduct business, at Tribar it is essential and centric to all they do. According to Tribar's Buyer, Connie Laeder, the mission is indicative of the way the company operates. “We live this every day, it is the way we work,” she said. “We never stop improving—every time we reach what we think is a “Best” in any of our processes, it becomes our new baseline.”

THE IMPLEMENTATION

Tribar's production processes—ISO/TS 16949:2009 and ISO 14001:2004 certified—start at the customer level. “We work very close with our customers,” said Miller. As an example, she cites the fact that her group sits down with a group of engineers from Ford and from Chrysler at least once a week. “We have a dedicated time, and we go through every program and every issue,” she said. “So it's definitely a very close hand-in-hand relationship with both Chrysler and Ford.”

At Tribar, relationships like these result in breakthrough products as in the case of the Ford F-150 oval logo. “It started when Ford came to us,” said Miller. “They had a major warranty issue because of peeling of their paint over chrome badging.



They asked us to figure out a way to get around this and make these parts look beautiful throughout the life of the vehicle.” Tribar assembled a solutions team that developed their unique and patented multi-piece assembly process which replaces the paint-over-chrome system with a molded part. “It solved Ford’s warranty issues,” added Miller.

The second part of the process is at the supplier level. “I’ll work with program management to set up the process and expectation with our suppliers,” said Laeder. “After that, we begin to fine-tune the processes until the project goes into production,” Laeder added that the process continues through her connection with customer service to ensure that releases are according to timelines.

When it comes to suppliers, Miller said that Boyd is at the top of the list. “My group takes the part from design to production so we start with CAD data, we look at it and provide feasibility including adding the back surface to it so that it attaches to a vehicle. That’s where Boyd comes in—they help us figure it out and provide us with the best solutions including the tapes to use.”

But Miller said that it is more than finding solutions; it’s also about service. “Just recently,” she added, “Ford had an installation issue and they asked us for help. At the last minute I sent an email to Boyd that said, ‘I need people at Ford tomorrow,’ it was nice to get an email response from Boyd saying, ‘What time do I need to be there?’ The next day Boyd showed up and together, we helped solve the issue. It is service like that, that I need, and which Boyd provides me—service that I can depend on.”

Miller added that while customer service and response time have been a constant, Boyd has also provided tremendous design resources. “We’ve done a lot with Boyd in the designing of parts. We just had a call from a client on how we could resolve an issue. And between a couple of people on my team and Boyd’s engineer, Eric Owen and his team, we came up with a good idea, kicked a new tool off, and we solved an issue that was brought up at the plant. And I know there’s been a couple of middle-of-the-night calls too when Ford has called and needed something and someone from Boyd actually drove through a snowstorm to get us parts that we needed.”

RESULTS

As a result of their daily commitment to their mission statement Tribar Manufacturing has become a leading edge company “Because of what we have done and continue to do for our clients, we’ve gained their confidence,” said Miller. “By proving that we can provide them with high-quality, beautifully designed and yet functional parts, more clients are asking us to solve specific problems by coming up with a yet-to-be designed solution which we will also manufacture.”

Advanced processes, systems, design capabilities, relationships with clients and suppliers like Boyd, and the desire to always be the best, has helped Tribar become a value-added supplier of injection-molded parts—from concept through production.

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