

MADE-IN-AMERICA LOCKNUTS – THE PROS AND CONS

Made-in-America has become an increasingly important issue in the domestic manufacturing market, particularly as the pandemic drove home America's vulnerability based on ocean-wide supply chains for core products such as locknuts and other fasteners. Today, the allure of lower "per-piece" costs is being balanced by considerations such as reliable deliveries, product quality, and the overall effectiveness of the manufacturer/supplier relationship.

This whitepaper will cover the subject of "Made-in-America" locknuts and other fasteners from various perspectives: financial, operational, quality, communications, and even from a nationalistic point of view. The goal of this whitepaper is to encourage one to consider the acquisition of fasteners and related hardware from a number of important perspectives, above and beyond cost.

PRODUCT COST

Locknuts and other fasteners from overseas suppliers can be significantly less expensive than similar products from domestic producers. However, as is often the case in manufacturing, “cost” is a complex subject. Some strategies exist to offset the cost differential between overseas and domestically sourced locknuts, including negotiating discounts for volume and longer-term contracts.

While all costs matter to an OEM, fastener pricing is normally a small part of the overall manufactured cost of a product. One has to consider whether other considerations – reliable delivery, fastener quality, and effective communications with fastener suppliers – and their associated impact on manufacturing efficiency and quality are worth the money saved by buying locknuts from offshore suppliers.



PRODUCT DELIVERY

Several hidden costs related to product delivery should be considered when weighing an offshore vs. domestic supply of fasteners. Late deliveries or delivery shortfalls can often impact production scheduling, costing a lot of money. Delivery shortfalls can also result in the manufacturer being required to purchase fasteners short-term at much higher prices until a reliable supply is available.



When locknuts are shipped across an ocean, there is always a chance of disruption by weather issues. Labor problems, both with the offshore manufacturer and at U.S. ports of entry, can also delay shipments. In addition, one can never predict when other social/political issues in supplier countries can result in severe disruptions of fastener supply chains.

If we learned nothing else from the pandemic, it is that counting on an overseas supply chain is not always the best strategy, and that sourcing from U.S. manufacturers will result in shorter lead times and faster, more reliable delivery.

FASTENER QUALITY

Fastener quality is another area where hidden costs can become a reality. When fasteners must be returned because of quality issues, there is an actual cost of administrative “churn.” A worst-case scenario is encountered when subpar-quality fasteners result in product failure and associated warranty costs. This same situation will undoubtedly result in some level of damage to the OEM’s reputation for product quality.

By choosing to source fasteners and hardware from within the United States, you can ensure that you are getting products that meet high-quality standards. US manufacturers are known for their expertise and precision in producing fasteners that are both reliable and durable. In addition, domestic fastener manufacturers adhere to strict quality assurance and compliance standards, ensuring that the fasteners you receive meet or exceed industry requirements.

You can always count on the quality of the locknuts from Lok-Mor since the company is certified to ISO 9001:2015, Mil-I-45208, ISO/IEC 17025, ANSI/ASME, and ASTM Specifications. Also, our A2LA-certified quality lab further assures the quality of our locknuts.



COMMUNICATIONS

Design engineers heading up a project may need a specific locknut by size, design, and material. In a situation where clear, effective communications can be critical to the process, working through those requirements with an offshore supplier can be problematic. Time zones, language, and even cultural issues can make the necessary level of collaboration difficult and inefficient.

By contrast, working with a U.S. fastener manufacturer can help expedite the process. Time zones are within an hour or two of one another, making meetings, even in-person meetings, possible. Being on the same continent also helps expedite the shipping of samples.

From a cultural and language perspective, communication is usually more effective when a domestic manufacturer is involved in any initiative. When all participants are conversant in English, details are more accurately communicated, and nuanced points are more readily understood.

NATIONAL PRIDE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Choosing to use US-manufactured fasteners is beneficial for your company and contributes to the growth and prosperity of the American economy. By supporting domestic manufacturers, you are helping to create and sustain jobs within the country, strengthen local communities, and promote economic stability.



At the same time, sourcing locknuts and other fasteners from domestic manufacturers reduces the U.S.' reliance on foreign suppliers and further contributes to national security.

While the issue of “buying American” is essential to this country’s economic health, it is understood that the primary responsibility of engineer-design and procurement personnel will always be to perform their job in the company’s best interest. However, if one were to dig deeper and consider all aspects of fastener sourcing and its impact on manufacturing processes, it often becomes clear that doing the best job for one’s company is “buying American.”

SUMMING UP

While the cost-per-unit must always be part of the decision process when sourcing locknuts or any other fastener, there are other issues to consider. These issues, including price, delivery, quality, and communications between fastener supplier and customer, can impact the efficiency of your manufacturing process and the quality and reliability of your product. In addition, by sourcing locknuts and other fasteners from U.S. manufacturers, one can do right by their company and their country.



Since 1982, Lok-Mor has set the standard for domestic locknut selection and quality. The company manufactures and stocks more than 20 different locknuts to meet a wide range of applications. To ensure the highest quality standards and a ready supply of locknuts, all manufacturing processes, locking, and testing are completed at the company's facility in Mansfield, TX.

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