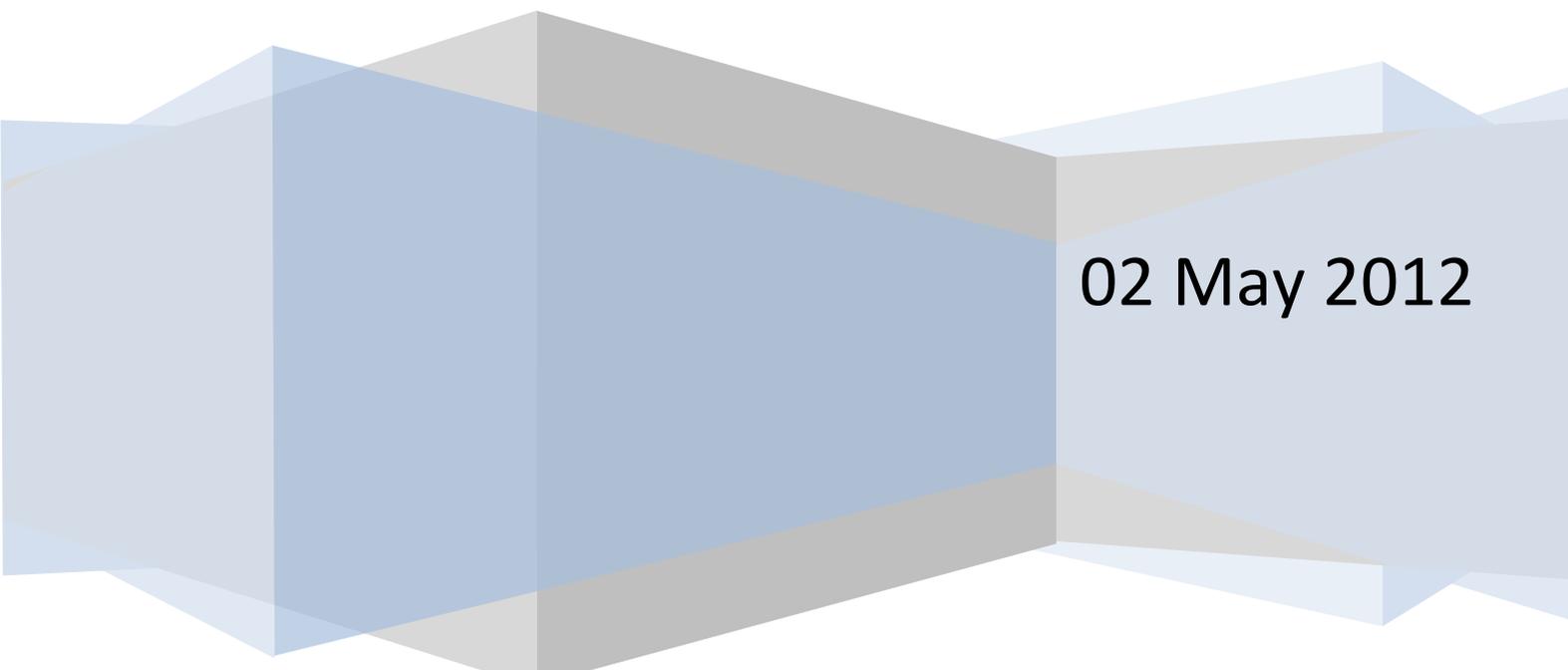


Transline Technology, Inc
Del Mar Electronics and Design Show

Falling in Love with Your PCB Supplier

Identifying the qualities of a great PCB
supplier/partner

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Attributes of a Great PCB Supplier

1. Technical Capability

- A great PCB supplier will have published, clear guidelines that outline their capabilities and technological limits. If capabilities are not listed on their website, ask for them and get clarification up front if needed. Ask to see samples of work that exhibits the outer limits of their capabilities to verify results. If your product presses the outer limits of their capabilities, ask them what yields they expect to have and how much overage will be run to make the needed yield.
- Always work with ISO-9000 certified suppliers. These companies are audited once or twice per year to ensure they have traceable systems in place which will directly affect their product and overall performance. They will also be required to document their return rates which you can ask to see. Both their strengths and opportunities for improvement must be carefully and continually monitored to maintain this certification.
- Board samples and a list of current customers tell volumes about a company's technical capability and performance.

2. Stable Workforce

- Nothing can wipe out a PCB suppliers quality faster than rapid turnover in the work force.
- Ask questions about how long key employees tend to stay with a company
- Ask about training systems for employees
- When doing a site survey, observe the working environment and engage in casual conversations with employees if possible and appropriate.

3. Communication

- You should be able to expect a standard returned quote within 12-24 hours unless it is a very large quote package, or they have requested additional time. Of course, in the case of quick turn prototypes this should be sooner. It helps if you communicate the time frame in which you need the quote back.
- You should be able to expect reasonable, proactive engineering support.
- You should be made aware of orders that will ship late well in advance of the due date.
- You should be spoken to with respect and professionalism, and offer the same in return.
- Due date should be mutually agreed upon at the time the order is placed. Some flexibility for unforeseen delays should be allowed within reason, but not a habitual occurrence.
- Critical issues should be put in writing and confirmed by both parties to avoid miscommunication.

4. Integrity

- You can expect a PCB supplier to say what they mean and mean what they say
- You can expect a PCB supplier to honor your NDA and guard your intellectual property
- You can expect honesty and principles to be in place
- You cannot expect any PCB supplier to be perfect. Making PCBs is a highly complex process and human and/or environmental error will happen. A good supplier will be honest, take responsibility and recover as quickly as possible.

5. Fairness/Reciprocity

- A good PCB supplier will offer fair prices, but not give product away or “buy” your business. A company that does this won’t tend to last nor have your best interests in mind.
- A good PCB supplier will neither kowtow to your demands, nor expect you to kowtow to theirs. The relationship should be framed in a win-win context for both parties.
- A good PCB supplier will expect you to pay in a timely fashion, but will work with you in special circumstances if necessary. This should never be exploitive.

6. Proactive Partnership

- The best kind of PCB supplier, the kind you can love, is a proactive partner who actively looks for ways to help you succeed. This may show up in great DFM help or cost reduction suggestions. It may come in the form of a technically savvy sales rep who works with you to achieve your goals of delivery, cost, or technical support. It may come in the form of timely and helpful communication. It always comes in the form of going the extra mile.
- A great PCB supplier knows that success is a team effort and that their success and yours are inextricably tied. Therefore, their commitment to your success should be a paramount and actively sought after goal.
- A great PCB supplier expects this relationship to be mutual and that, to the degree in which they support you, they can expect your loyalty and commitment in return. This in turn, makes you a customer that anyone will love and go the distance to serve!