

# 4 things to do before you speak to an EMS provider

So you've decided to outsource some or all of your manufacturing operation - that's great news! Many Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) make the **strategic decision to outsource** so they can reduce risk, lower costs and improve productivity.

Perhaps you've already shortlisted potential Electronics Manufacturing Services (EMS) providers to partner with. In fact, you may be on the verge of picking up the phone or sending out a request for quotation (RFQ).

But before you reach out, there are a number of things you should do first to ensure that you can have a productive conversation with an EMS provider about how they might be able to meet your needs.

We always love to hear from potential new customers, but we need to understand what you're looking to achieve so that we can help determine the right solution for you.

So, here are four things we recommend you do before speaking with an EMS provider.

## 1. Make sure you know what your objectives are

Before you reach out to EMS providers, you need to be clear on exactly what you want to gain from your **outsourcing partnership**. What does it mean for your company? What are your expectations in the short, mid and long-term?

These may seem like obvious questions. But if you have any doubt or uncertainty, it will be a lot harder for us to figure out the right solution for you. It will also be impossible for you to determine whether the EMS provider is a **good fit** for your company. So, be sure to take the time to set out your strategic objectives before you dive right in.

## 2. Determine the services you will need

Have you decided how much of your operation you want to outsource? Generally speaking, it makes sense to outsource as much as possible because that's where you'll

get the greatest amount of benefit. But perhaps there are some technical aspects of the build process you would prefer to maintain in house.

What about other services, like **design for manufacture (DFM)**, **configure-to-order (CFO)** or **direct ship fulfilment**? How much would you like your EMS partner to get involved in these areas? EMS providers are often adding innovative new services to their remit. If you haven't already, it's worth exploring the potential impact some of these services could have for your company.

These are all things you will need to think about ahead of speaking with an EMS provider. That way you can have a proper discussion about how they can meet your needs.

### 3. Prepare your build pack

From a technical perspective, there's a large amount of data your EMS provider will need before you start working with them. The detail and quality of information you provide in your **build pack** will have a huge influence on the success of your outsourcing partnership. At the very least, an EMS provider will need the Bill of Materials (BOM), drawings for each bespoke or "made to print" item, production build packs, and manufacturing/test data.

At this early stage, having some gaps in your data won't necessarily hinder the EMS provider's ability to provide you with a quote. But it will certainly speed things up and avoid headaches down the line if you take the time to gather your data now. There may be more to do than you anticipate.

The build pack you have on file, for example, may not entirely reflect what actually happens in practice. It's not uncommon for a degree of "local knowledge" to be built up across the factory floor, and you will need to extract every last drop so that it can be transferred to your EMS partner later down the line. So it's a good idea to be proactive and start thinking about gathering and reviewing your data now.

### 4. Write down all the questions you want to ask

If you've created a shortlist of providers and you're ready to pick up the phone, you've probably already determined from your research that they might be a good match. But now you're looking for further evidence, so what do you need to know?

Maybe you would like to know how big they are in relation to your business, the typical volumes they build, or the complexity of the products they produce. This will help determine whether they are a good overall fit for your company. Be sure to write down a list of all the questions you have before you pick up the phone so that you don't miss anything.

## Are you ready to outsource?

Whatever your motivation for outsourcing, you need to consider whether you're ready. You may like having the production team in the next building, because it gives you a sense of security and control. And while your practices may not be entirely fit for purpose, they do provide peace of mind. You've been manufacturing your products for years and have perfected the process. Are you really ready to take off the comfort blanket and **put your trust** in someone else?

It's also important to bear in mind that outsourcing can be a complex process. It isn't a quick fix and it can take six to eight months to get tangible results. In the meantime, there will be plenty of disruption.

But if you are really ready to take the plunge, and you can find an EMS partner you can trust, then it will be worth the wait for results. Just make sure you know what you want and have a good handle on your data before you pick up the phone. Finding the **right EMS partner for your company** is crucial if you want to realise the benefits of outsourcing.