



## Navigating the Detours... while working with a Contract Manufacturer

The reality of the manufacturing environment is even with the best custom printed circuit board manufacturer's (CM's) occasionally, **s\*\*t happens (aka detours)**. What separates the best CM's from the others is how they respond on the rare occasion that this occurs.

Has the CM truly created a real partnership with you? Do they actually use all of their numerous ISO quality certification systems to find the root cause of the problem? Can they be counted on to implement the appropriate levels of corrective actions? Lastly, do they have the ability to maintain the corrective actions beyond a singular event? The proper answers and actions to these questions can help identify a CM that can create positive outcomes out of these events.

### A Fresh Approach

In the midst of a prototype run for a customer's new product release, an unexpected delay came to light. SoPark partnered with our customer to determine the root cause.

The result identified a design issue that needed to be resolved. To discover potential options, we contacted a local university to obtain an engineering intern to bring a fresh pair of eyes to the next run. The customer liked the idea and offered to split the cost of the intern with SoPark.

The intern was provided the background of the challenges with the prototype, and was informed that their loyalty was not to SoPark or SoPark's customer, but rather to the project itself.

This fresh approach led to the discovery of process and design changes that were immediately implemented. SoPark's customer was so pleased, that when the intern graduated, he was hired by SoPark's customer for a full time job!



- **Have they truly created a real partnership with you?** - The question of a real partnership usually never gets challenged until an actual issue arises. Does the CM immediately focus on root cause and corrective action, or do they jump to the blame game? The best CM's take the right pathway immediately. Here is a link regarding partnerships for more information:

[How Today's Businesses Are Using Partnerships To Improve The Customer Experience](#)  
*Useful discussion on partnerships.*

- **Do they actually use all of their numerous ISO systems and other quality certifications to find the root cause of the problem?** - Certifications are great but they need to be more than just a certificate on the wall. The underlying benefits of obtaining ISO, and other certifications, lies in the ability to apply them effectively to solve problems. Some quick links for more information:

[What is Root Cause Analysis \(RCA\)? | ASQ](#) *General definition and links from ASQ.*

[SoPark-CNEWS-3.1-Navigating-International-Standards-Jan-2024.pdf](#) *Circuit News references and helpful links from the folks at SoPark.*

- **Can they be counted on to implement the appropriate levels of corrective actions?** - Let's say your CM found the root cause. What steps are they taking to implement the corrective actions? How can you be sure? More related links worth checking out:

[ISO 9001 Clause 10.2: A Guide to Nonconformity and Corrective Actions](#) *General definition and action plans from Encompass Consultants.*

[Microsoft Word - APG-ReviewNonconformity2015.doc](#) *Reference article from ISO.org*

**Lastly, do they have ability to maintain the corrective actions beyond a singular event?** - Building a team relationship with a CM helps develop the trust needed to set timeframe milestones that ensure sustainability of the relationship.

[10.2 Non-Conformity & Corrective Action](#) *Good Article from ISO.uk.org -Steps 5 and 6.*

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