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SEALS

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DESIGN GUIDES

YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) / [FEATURED](#) / WHY STOCKING STANDARD PRODUCTS PAYS OFF FOR OEM AND SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS

Why stocking standard products pays off for OEM and supplier relationships

JUNE 7, 2023 BY [MARY GANNON](#) — [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)



Contributed by Scott Christensen, Americas Purchasing Manager, Trelleborg Sealing Solutions

Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and their tier suppliers rely on sealing partners for a wide range of services and capabilities. An experienced and knowledgeable sealing supplier can provide everything from high-quality custom sealing solutions and FEA analysis to online tools and resources for engineers.

With a heavy focus on these specialty services and capabilities that provide innovation and efficiency, customers look for the fastest and most accessible source for standard products when they need them. Seal suppliers who are able to provide timely solutions to a customer's problem with standard products, such as an O-Ring, are often the ones who have a readily available stock of parts.

Don't overlook the O-ring

Often overlooked compared to more complex sealing technologies, suppliers may not keep a wide range of standard O-Rings in stock. However, those that do have a major advantage when it comes to service. Following supply chain disruptions caused by the pandemic, workforce shortages, and natural disasters, customers increasingly focus on supply assurance.



According to a 2022 analysis from Deloitte, the second most cited operational concern for manufacturers was suppliers who are struggling to meet demand¹. If you don't keep standard products on your shelf, someone else does. Stocking them makes you more competitive as a supplier. Repair shops are often small mom and pop operations that don't realize they need standard O-rings until they do, and they assume they will be available at any time.

Stocking up pays off

Committing to stock standard products can also generate new business for a seal supplier. For example, an OEM came to Trelleborg with a drawing for an O-ring in an industry standard material and asked for an equivalent. In this instance, Trelleborg had the corresponding O-ring size in an equivalent material in stock and provided an immediate quote, as well as a quick turnaround to supply the product. Stock availability allowed Trelleborg to build a new relationship with the customer.

Seal suppliers can go a step further and offer customers advanced planning for regular shipments of standard products. One Trelleborg customer routinely purchases larger diameter standard O-rings that are less likely to be in stock. The customer's commitment to buy a certain quantity of O-rings every month enabled Trelleborg to ensure their availability.

Conclusion

Seal suppliers tend to focus on custom products as they typically involve the most recent technology and provide a competitive advantage. Likewise, OEMs often keep their sights on the latest and most innovative solutions their suppliers bring to the table. However, customers requiring a standard product quickly want to count on a supplier that has the product in stock to mitigate unpredictable supply chains.

Trelleborg Sealing Solutions

[Trelleborg.com](https://www.trelleborg.com)

1. <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/manufacturing/realigning-global-supply-chain-management-networks.html>

Setting the standard

Utilizing industry standard design profiles and sizes ensures designers and end users can easily and quickly specify sealing components, allowing the reuse of hardware designs. Standardization also supports ease of repair, refurbishment, and reuse through readily available replacement parts.

Trelleborg used its technical expertise and standard products to help Lion Hydraulics improve productivity and in-house assembly times by switching to a standard Dualseal for their static seals on hydraulic cylinders.

Lion was using a two-piece O-ring and Back-up Ring combination when Trelleborg introduced them to the single-piece standard Polyurethane (PU) Dualseal, which retrofitted their existing groove. In addition to saving valuable assembly and production time, the switch to the PU Dualseal also alleviated quality issues that Lion experienced in the field with their nitrile rubber Back-up Ring.

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