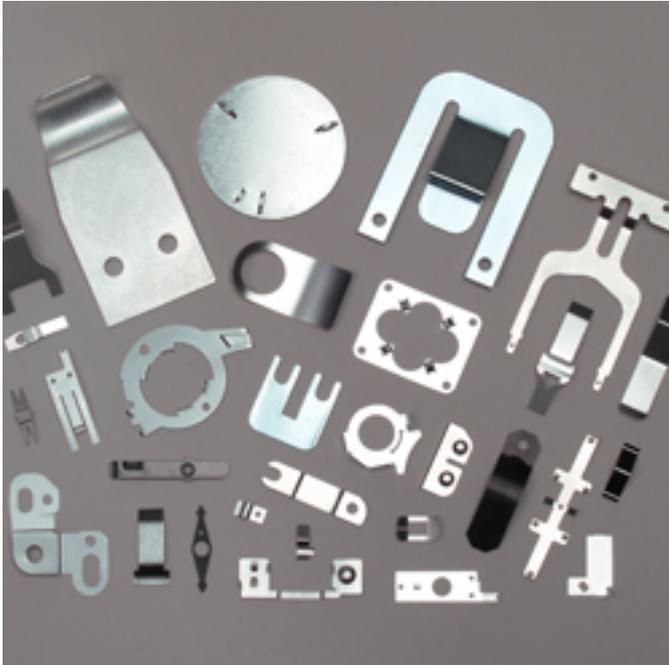


Domestic 'Fourslide' Parts Fabrication Slashes Inventory Costs

Ed Sullivan



If you're sourcing stamped metal parts from overseas, you may be required to order far more than you really need. Using fourslide fabrication can eliminate that requirement.

If you're sourcing metal stampings from overseas locations such as China, you're most likely buying in large volumes, perhaps containerloads. Chances are you're also buying into some potential drawbacks, including prolonged lead times, sketchy communications, expensive tooling and the inability to stamp individual parts with complex shapes.

One of the most troublesome drawbacks of those large volume overseas purchases is an excessive inventory requirement, which not only affects your cash outlay for parts, but also means you may have those parts on hand far longer than necessary, perhaps exceeding the lifecycle of the product they support. In such cases, leftover parts are often scrapped and the economies-of-scale benefit of stamping parts overseas is thwarted.

Increasingly, U.S. manufacturers are becoming less prone to making large-volume parts commitments, particularly in segments where products go through more frequent upgrades, resulting in shorter life cycles. Many are finding that "fourslide" metal forming is a less expensive, more timely and flexible solution that can reduce their inventory investments with JIT deliveries from a domestic supplier, instead of taking months to receive from an overseas stamping operation.

Outsourcing parts from overseas often results in large volumes and expensive tooling. Conversely, fourslide production uses a series of relatively inexpensive tools

Domestic 'Fourslide' Parts Fabrication Slashes Inventory Costs

Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

that make component parts in volumes of even a few thousand at an affordable cost, which is much more in line with many of today's manufacturers' requirements.

"Below the million [parts] mark, where many of us manufacturers reside, fourslide holds the advantage because of the very low cost of the tooling," points out Anthony Viggiano, co-owner of Autotether, Inc. (Rocky Hill, CT), which makes a unique, multi-functional wireless alarm switch for boating safety applications. "With the fourslide process, the cost of the tool isn't that great, so your capital investment isn't high."

Although the term "fourslide" is generic, Autotether has chosen Fourslide Spring and Stamping Inc. (Bristol, CT) as its supplier. Fourslide offers customers the material of choice, such as metal wire and flat strips of stainless steel, beryllium copper, phosphor bronze, brass, high carbon steel and other materials, as well as finishes of electroless nickel, gold, silver, zinc and other metals. Assembly, and secondary operations such as drilling and tapping are also available from this supplier.

The fourslide process uses a sequence of stamping and forming operations on a single workstation, and can execute multiple bends, radii, angles greater than 90°, dimples and other features - before the part is ejected. This capability yields precision metal stampings, flat springs, wire forms, contacts and other complex forms for a wide range of medical, electrical, automotive, aerospace, military, consumer and industrial applications. The simplicity in producing fourslide tools, versus the time-consuming complexity of power press tools, translates into a significant reduction of lead times approaching 50% or more. Compared with overseas suppliers, the lead-time savings could be even greater.

Jim Richards, Director of Sales & Marketing at Fourslide Spring and Stamping, points out that a U.S.-based fourslide fabricator has the ability to support the manufacturer-customer all the way through the process, from design through finishing. "The communication that occurs at various stages, in early design, prototype, or production, requires a high level of involvement with the parts manufacturer. The possibility of miscommunications is usually far less with a domestic supplier, and that can be vital to achieving the desired end result."

Source URL (retrieved on 07/28/2014 - 11:06am):

<http://www.ecnmag.com/blogs/2010/12/domestic-fourslide-parts-fabrication-slashes-inventory-costs>