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Small Change Lowers Cost

Belleville, Mich., January 17, 2007—Sometimes stuff happens when you transition from the developmental stage to full production of a part. But it's how you handle the unexpected that separates the best from the rest. When a customer contracted us to produce a new part, the preproduction samples were just what they were looking for. Soon after full production was implemented, we noticed a sporadic problem with cracking. Our quality control procedures ensured that no defective parts left our plant, but the situation required action to eliminate waste and redundancy. That's when we implemented our 8D problem-solving process.

The Root Cause Analysis determined that the alloy specified for this part might account for the cracking. We consulted with a metallurgist—an expert in aluminum—who confirmed our theory. Now that the source of the problem was identified, we had to develop a practical solution to present to the customer. Our expert advised us that a slightly different aluminum alloy would provide all the same product performance requirements while providing a better material for that particular deep-draw application. We successfully tested the suggested material and presented samples to the customer. Then additional testing, samples and documentation were provided to the customer to prove that the alternate material met all the product's specifications and requirements. And because the new material reduced waste and redundant quality checks, we were able to offer a lower cost per part to our customer.

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