

Electrical enclosures now coming with increasing added value

In every field of endeavour people like to be treated well and get a good deal. As any good buyer knows, the best deals are rarely the cheapest or those with the most money off; more often they are about 'added value'. While this can take an infinite number of forms, it can be summed up as an additional service or consideration which adds a greater benefit – or value – to the end user. Technical equipment like electrical enclosures are increasingly supplied with added value and the buyer-supplier relationship is changing into one of true partnership, as Chris Lloyd Managing Director of Spelsberg UK explores.

On the most basic level an electrical enclosure is a box that you put stuff in. Of course electrical engineers will immediately say there is a lot more to them than that – and in doing so they are 'adding value' to the very idea of an enclosure.

They will explain that enclosures are carefully designed to meet some very technical needs; their materials of construction have been formulated to satisfy defined performance specifications; they comply with multiple demanding standards; they are used the world over and ensure safety for literally billions of people. They are in fact very highly designed technical 'systems' that meet their users' requirements in a large number of important ways.

High quality manufacturers keep the development of enclosure technology moving as the requirements of end-users expand. Electrical enclosures can be made to meet any specified need, and end-users will always find more requirements they would like met. In fact this gives the manufacturers the opportunity to talk through requirements with potential clients and see where they can help further – to add value.

In many cases, there may be some simple ways to add value. These could be as straightforward as meeting specific delivery schedules or supplying in non-standard order sizes. They could include slightly modified products; say a non-standard colour or unusual fittings. Slightly more complex, the products could be customised or even fully bespoke. Delivery could be very unusual, say to a ship that is on passage. Delivery may include installation and commissioning.

With electrical enclosures, they could be supplied fully wired and fitted out so that their installation becomes a quick and simple plug-and-play operation.

To really benefit from added value, the supplier must form a deep relationship with the buyer, thus becoming almost like a consultant. The buyer needs to feel comfortable spending time with the supplier so that they can talk things through thoroughly, including concepts and big picture ideas, fine details, operational issues and long term plans. The supplier should listen to all this and try to offer some ideas for addressing each issue.

A common finding is that buyers will select products that are appropriate to the job in hand. But an expert supplier who is a skilful listener may have picked up on the fact that the selected product will not be able to meet the needs of a potential development that the buyer has outlined for six or 12 months time. In such a case the supplier should at least suggest a product that will meet the current and proposed future needs, but it would be even better if the supplier suggested their two technical teams should meet and look at long term development options.

Such a meeting could be the beginnings of a long term multi-faceted relationship with the two companies interacting at many different levels and forming a mutually beneficial partnership.

An example of how enclosure companies can add value is by developing good in-house CNC capabilities. This will allow them to supply highly customised enclosures direct and with virtually no lead times. As well as enabling customers to order modified enclosures, OEMs and contractors can use the facility as a fast prototyping service, which will save time and money and allow them improve their service to their clients. CNC operations can include milling, drilling and engraving services and allow the inclusion of custom cable entries. The engraving of brands, logos, operating instructions or safety information on an enclosure is often simple to achieve yet can add huge value to the overall project.

Indeed CNC machining is now so advanced that an enclosure manufacturer can offer 24 hour turn round, no minimum order quantity, one-off engraving and aperture cutting.

Added value embraces not only the physical products but also the service, support, expertise, advice and consultation. For instance, many electrical installations need a considerable amount of design and installation expertise, which enclosure suppliers can help with. In switchgear construction for, say, industrial plants, pumping stations, sports complexes, theatres and retail malls, dedicated enclosure suppliers will support clients in planning their systems. For example, Spelsberg's expert in-house technical team can assist with project planning and to discuss bespoke designs, data sheets and other technical documentation can also be produced.

Related to this, large electrical systems are subjects to stringent fire and safety regulations, and an electrical enclosure company is likely to be fully conversant with all the details, so can share this knowledge and enable its customers' projects to proceed on a right-first-time basis.

One area in which added value can be very evident is in the construction of buildings. If you have ever been involved in the construction of a new warehouse or watched a new hospital being built on your route to work, you may have noticed that the outer shell usually goes up at commendable speed, but then the fitting out seems to take an age. In an industry where time is very definitely money, this can be something of an issue.

Spelsberg can help compress the fitting out times by supplying prewired enclosures and even mounting them into major building panels, whether they are pre-cast concrete, cast on-site or timber framed.

In summary we can conclude that while product quality, breadth of range, cost competitiveness and availability are important, 'value added' services are equally significant. Today's best enclosure manufacturers are working more and more closely with their customers to offer customised and bespoke solutions, turn-key packages, delivery and stock management to help eliminate lead times and their intrinsic costs.

So it is good advice not to focus solely on product prices, but to look at the whole package of values that can come with them.

“Space for you”

Spelsberg's company philosophy is based around the idea of providing flexibility and freedom to its customers. The space provided within each junction box; the large distribution and warehousing space; and the freedom to customise almost any product, irrespective of quantity, all equates to “Space for you”.

About Spelsberg

Spelsberg is one of the largest manufacturers of electrical enclosures in the world. With over 4,000 enclosures available as standard and further customisation possible, it offers solutions for almost any application.

With the largest supply of non-metallic enclosures, ex-stock in the UK, its products are often available for delivery within 24 hours; customisation is possible on any product, including bespoke entries, engraved corporate logos or fitted terminals, within 48 hours. Products can be ordered direct from Spelsberg or from most leading supply specialists including RS, Rapid, Farnell and CPC.

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