

The role of the stockist/distributor

In a fast-moving manufacturing industry it is sometimes difficult to bridge the gap between manufacturers' requirements of bulk quantities and long delivery times, and the needs of the end user of the material who wants to be able to buy the exact required quantity and have it 'right away'.

A stockist/distributor can fulfil a useful role in spanning this gap. A good stockist can normally provide a wider range of products or grades than can be obtained from a single manufacturer, and can supply them in the specific quantities required by the end user and within the required time frame.

There is a price to be paid for this service, but when the potential savings are taken into account the overall costing may favour the stockist route, even when the actual selling price of the stockist is more than a bulk purchase from a manufacturer.

The customer can also make savings through reduced inventory costs, reduction in required storage space, improved cash flow, reduced sourcing time, and no chance of obsolete stocks.

For customers overseas there are also important logistical benefits and cost savings in being able to ship in one consignment rather than having to arrange (and pay for) several individual shipments or courier charges from separate suppliers.

When buying a product from stock, rather than with an extended delivery time, it is easy to check the readily available test certification before committing to an order, to ensure complete compliance with the end user's local specifications.

A large stockist may even have several batches or a choice of manufacturing origins on many items.

Some stockists will have their own machine shops and keep a full range of semi-finished items that can be quickly machined to customers' requirements.

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