



Washroom fitting company achieves 'best-in-class' fittings through clever design

Customer

Enware

Website

www.enware.com.au

Region

Australia

Industry

Manufacturing

- Designer washrooms company sharpens competitive edge with on-demand metals manufacturing specialist
- Industrial design company powers customisation, fast turnaround for designer washroom manufacturer
- Precision metal company makes splash in international washroom fittings market

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Richard Vial, Materials Manager, Enware

Australian washroom-fittings specialist, Enware, needed a design-savvy manufacturing company to help fill demand for high-value washroom units. In 2011, they turned to Sydney-based FountainLine IMS, which manufacture precision components to-order. After the first 100-strong production run, FountainLine became a valued manufacturing partner, sharing design expertise, reducing production costs, and shortening contract lead-times. Greater flexibility has helped Enware expand its market in Australia and export to Asia and Europe.

Business Needs

Sydney-based Enware is an Australian manufacturing success-story, a privately-owned company that designs and makes washroom fittings to-order. Since it began trading, Enware has grown a highly diversified customer base, from architects, who want stylish, high-end tapware for designer apartments, to hospitals and prisons that need ultra-durable, semi-automatic sinks and washroom units.

Enware manufactures at two facilities in Caringbah, Sydney. Using imported and locally-supplied components, they turn and style taps and shower heads, chrome-plate them, and then assemble them into ready-to-install fixtures that include sensors and mountings. To complete short production runs of individually designed units and to tight time-scale, Enware relies on a network of specialist suppliers.

“In late 2011, we needed help with steel cutting,” says Richard Vial, Materials Manager, Enware. “We needed stainless steel face-plates for emergency washroom units we sold to mining sites. The specifications change with each batch, which makes them difficult to get right, and they have to be completed to a very high level of finish. Our existing supplier struggled to meet our irregular orders with the required dispatch quality.”

“We were on the look-out for an alternative supplier,” he adds. “There was a complication, however. We were happy with the company who provided laser-etching onto the plates, so we needed someone who could work seamlessly with our existing supply chain.”





Component assembly

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Solution

Richard invited FountainLine IMS to his factory. Founded 70 years ago, FountainLine is an industrial design and production company that manufactures components using precision machining, laser-cutting and stamping facilities at a 1500m² factory facility in Kogarah.

“The chief executive of FountainLine came to see me, and asked if he could produce the next run,” says Richard. “FountainLine said they would work directly with our original laser-etching supplier and provide the plates on a one-stop-shop basis. I took a look around their factory, and decided to give them a go.”

FountainLine delivered an initial batch of 100 stainless steel faceplates. Meticulous packaging ensured the plates arrived in mint condition, and the quality proved faultless. “It’s immediately obvious that FountainLine take great care with their manufacturing,” says Richard. “This sounds simple, but if you take the care out of manufacturing, then in the end the quality will be hit, and that’s where we used to incur cost.”

“As a direct result of our first experience, we switched suppliers. This decision proved to be just the start of a much broader and very fruitful relationship. In the space of two years, FountainLine has become a key partner for Enware—not just manufacturing components but helping us design new products, deliver contracts faster, and expand our business.”

Benefits

Today, FountainLine is a powerful partner in Enware’s constant drive for customisation. As architects refine their designs, FountainLine helps Enware respond quickly and efficiently, turning out short, high-value production runs to ever-changing specifications.

Intelligent industrial design

According to Richard, what makes FountainLine different is their ability to improve design. “These guys really understand on-demand and custom componentry,” he says. “Our in-house designers don’t always appreciate the manufacturing implications of using certain materials. FountainLine understand industrial design perfectly, but they don’t just tell us the problems – they come to us with solutions.”

“FountainLine also knows how to take the cost out of a product,” he adds. “We have given them a new design, and they’ve got back to us and said: ‘if you design it slightly differently, then it will be easier to manufacture, and cost less. We help each other manage our costs.’”



Stocked components

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Reliable delivery, flexible scheduling

Delivery performance has proved a point of difference for FountainLine. Fast, and responsive, FountainLine finds ways to help Enware when customers require something extra.

“FountainLine will often stagger delivery to help out a building project,” says Richard. “If a contractor suddenly says they need to start fitting out quickly, FountainLine will run off an initial batch of 20 or 30 fittings at lightning speed so our customers’ schedules aren’t impacted. Then they will make up the remainder in subsequent batches as works progress.”

“FountainLine is also highly responsive to changes in detail. Many of our customers are architects, and they like to change the designs with each production run. Never-the-less, FountainLine delivers on-time, and has always turned an order around faster if it’s urgent. On one occasion, they produced a totally new fixture for us with only ten days lead time.”

A highly collaborative partnership

According to Richard, the key to Enware’s expanding business relationship is transparency and collaboration. He makes frequent visits to the FountainLine factory to satisfy the company’s quality auditing, and so FountainLine can update him on their new machinery.

“FountainLine is completely open about their manufacturing capabilities,” says Richard. “That is really valuable to us because it helps us manage our risks. We talk through the critical path of supply, so that we avoid any surprises. And FountainLine makes communication easy. I can always talk to them, and they will often jump straight in their car and come round for a face-to-face.”

A force for business expansion

The FountainLine partnership is helping Enware penetrate new markets. As the company bids to supply newly-built hospitals and prisons with fresh washroom technology, FountainLine executives ensure that production plans and commercial terms are quickly settled.

“Their engineering guys come over with us to see if a concept is viable,” says Richard. “Also, settling terms is hassle-free. Our price negotiations are never tiresome or painful: we establish a benchmark and keep to target. This makes business easy. With FountainLine, we know we can supply new customers on time at the agreed price, and this gives us the confidence to bid for difficult jobs.”



Component interface

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Setting new standards of competition

In Australia’s high-end, short-run manufacturing sector, the partnership between Enware and FountainLine has helped set new standards of efficiency.

“Our customers have got used to us delivering new washrooms and projects in very tight time scales, so what we used to think of as a fast turnaround has become the new normal,” says Richard. “Now they know we can respond, we have set a new competitive standard.”

“Also, customers know they can be more demanding in terms of the product. Customers have got used to the idea we have highly flexible engineering resources and can rise to new design challenges. As a result we can continually increase our product scope—that’s a testament to the service we get from FountainLine.”



Stocked components ready for distribution