

Brief

Stamping Ideas into Reality

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Is It *Continual* or *Continuous* Improvement?

Just when we think we know everything there is to know about the International Organization of Standards (ISO), a new certification appears! [ISO/TS 16949](#) is an expanded version of ISO 9000, the Quality Management System Standard, developed by the International Automotive Task Force. This new standard specifically addresses the requirements of the automotive industries in the United States and Europe. Registration to ISO/TS 16949 is a requirement for any tier-one company wanting to supply its products to automotive manufacturers.

So why is Die-Tech, a tier-two supplier, touting the certification? Bob Einsig explains, "We already had a strong ISO 9000-based quality system in place. But in order to compete favorably in the auto parts supply markets, we believe that two-tier manufacturers as well as the first-tier manufacturers should position themselves to meet the changing demands of the auto manufacturers."

There is a hierarchy of manufacturer-supplier relationships. The tier-one sector is experiencing increased demands to shorten its production time and implement cost savings. Attaining the ISO/TS 16949 certification is evidence of Die-Tech's strong commitment to improved communications and continual improvement. "We want to speak the language of our tier one customers," adds Einsig. "Good communication is integral to our success. When we understand our customers' expectations, we are able to meet their specifications and produce a defect-free part."

Is there a difference between continual and continuous improvement? Einsig says there is, "Think of *continual*

improvement as a straight track, and we are moving in one direction along it. *Continual* improvement happens in peaks and plateaus, adjusting what we do along the way. Measurement of improvement looks more like a staircase."

Einsig describes the process for certification. "First we established how close we were to the established criteria by conducting a gap analysis, and then it was time for training. Once the internal auditor training for TS was complete, we proceeded through a two-stage audit process for certification."

What does this mean to Die-tech customers? Metal stampings can [improve the quality and consistency of a manufacturing process](#). By standardizing our processes, we are helping our customers meet their challenges in the global marketplace.

ISO/TS 16949 is an automotive quality system standard, but this certification is also an indicator of the quality standards Die-Tech maintains for all its customers. Are you seriously committed to product and process improvement? Perhaps it is time to team with a metal stamper that understands your focus.

Win a gift certificate! Send your ideas for Die-Tech product improvements and services to ideabox@die-tech.com and you will be entered in our quarterly drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift certificate.

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