



## BUSINESS PROBLEM

As an invention-driven company, Crow Ventures continually needs individual parts and small quantities of parts for prototypes and tests, often as quickly as possible. Successful designs go into limited production for further testing and test marketing, requiring short runs of 50 or 100 parts. One-off and short runs are expensive, through 'ordinary' channels, and finding willing suppliers is often difficult.

## SOLUTION

Darby Crow is an inventor-engineer-entrepreneur. He is currently working on two major projects; a long-term project to develop a proprietary engine technology that relates to solar power generation, and a next-generation motorized bicycle. Each of these projects has presented unique sourcing challenges that have been satisfied using the MFG.com online manufacturing marketplace.

Crow started on solar engine project about four years ago. During the initial design, he drew up some unique manufactured parts and went out to local machine shops for price and lead-time quotes for prototypes. "All of the proposals were coming back very expensive," Crow says, "much higher than what was acceptable for this project."

Crow's next stop was the Internet. "I did some searches and found MFG.com," he says. His experiences with the online marketplace since that time have been very rewarding. "I have been extremely

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*-Darby Crow  
Engineer, Crow Ventures*

pleased, to say the least. The quotes from MFG.com members were 50% to 70% less for those first prototypes." Because of the pricing, quality and service he has gotten from MFG.com suppliers, Crow has continued to rely on MFG.com for parts for prototypes and for small run productions.

The other current project is the motorized bicycle. "Motorized bikes have been around for some time," he explains, "but there is a fundamental limitation – there are no changeable gears like on most pedal-powered bikes. So, the motor is geared to handle hills without stalling and therefore the bike can't go very fast because the gear ratio is too low." The obvious solution, putting a multi-gear transmission on a motorized bike is a lot easier said than done. But Crow has solved the engineering and design problems and is getting ready for the first limited quantity production run. His bicycle will climb any hill and cruising speed tops out at about 30 miles-per-hour. It's stylish,



## Customer **SHOWCASE** Program

## Case Study Crow Ventures

has the range of power and speed to make it a lot more attractive than other motorized bikes, and it gets between 150 and 200 miles per gallon.

"I do essentially 100% of my custom parts sourcing through MFG.com," he says, "gears, housings, wheels, and other manufactured parts. It wouldn't otherwise be possible to find suppliers for the small quantities we need for the initial production run (50 bicycles) at affordable costs."

Crow appreciates the ability to talk with the suppliers and discuss the designs during the R&D process. And he knows that the suppliers want to do good work because they get a rating each time they supply parts through the marketplace, and potential customers look very closely at those ratings when they make sourcing decisions.

"I pretty much know what I'm going to get," Crow says. "The ratings will say 'always delivers early or on-time,' or 'exceptional quality' and I can count on that kind of performance. I'm also expected to rate

every purchase I make through the marketplace so that other customers can see how the supplier performed on my contracts."

Crow recalls one instance when he did have a problem with a contract: "The supplier was late with the sample part, so I sent (the supplier) an e-mail asking 'where's my sample,'" he explains. "The next thing I know, one of the MFG.com executives is talking to the supplier, without my even asking for their help, trying to find out what happened and getting the situation corrected. MFG.com keeps a very close eye on things and jumps in whenever there's a problem or a question. That's great customer service."

### **ABOUT CROW VENTURES**

San Diego, CA-based inventor-engineer-entrepreneur developing and marketing new and unique products in a number of markets.

### **BENEFITS**

Ability to source prototype and small quantity parts at affordable prices

Visible supplier quality ratings and customer experiences for supplier selection

Reliable suppliers, high quality, on-time delivery

Great customer service and quality control