



Are Travel Restrictions to China Delaying Your Product Launch Cycle?

In-Region OEM Support in the Era of the Coronavirus

March 2, 2020

The period after Chinese New Year is a critical time in the product launch cycle for many global organizations. February flights from the United States and Europe are typically filled with engineers headed to China to kickoff engineering validation testing (EVT) for products that will launch in the December holiday season. Many original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) also send representatives to China during this timeframe to help address factory staff turnover associated with the conclusion of the Chinese New Year.

This year, Chinese authorities extended the Chinese New Year holidays through midnight of February 9th in attempt to curb the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus). Unfortunately, ongoing travel restrictions are continuing to make it impractical or impossible for many companies to send their own employees to China. To protect both employee safety and product launch timelines, global organizations should consider partnering with in-region experts to address product ramp challenges.

Importance of On-the-Ground Support of Contract Manufacturers

Active management of contract manufacturers is critically important to a successful product launch. On-the-ground OEM representatives can support design and manufacturing decisions, including the qualification of new suppliers, supplier audits, inventory management, quality control, and reliability test design. They can also provide an unbiased appraisal of key challenges that may arise when transitioning from EVT to design validation testing (DVT), and from DVT to production validation testing (PVT).

On-the-ground OEM representatives in Q1 can additionally address the turnover of factory staff who obtain new jobs or decide not to return to work after the Chinese

New Year. This year, staffing gaps are particularly high, as local quarantine and travel regulations have further reduced the ability of staff to return to work. Once quarantine is lifted in the manufacturing sector in China, a more cost-effective solution for offshore manufacturers may be to utilize a local source of expertise to assist with their product ramp requirements.

Impact of Current Travel Restrictions

Presently, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that companies and people suspend all non-essential travel to China. Any U.S. citizens or permanent residents that do go to China may find that they are required to self-quarantine for 14 days upon their return to the United States. Many other countries in both Europe and Asia are giving similar guidelines in hopes of reducing the spread of the coronavirus. Many major U.S. and global airlines have cancelled flights to and from mainland China. Recent reports also state that two-thirds of all international flights from China have been cancelled.

While these restrictions are critical from a global health perspective, they are currently making it impractical or impossible for many global companies to send their own employees to China.

Are Travel Restrictions to China Delaying Your Product Launch Cycle?

How Exponent Can Help

Exponent's offices in Hong Kong and Shanghai have a combined 34 consultants, most of whom are U.S.- and European-educated Ph.D.'s. We have the experience, industrial knowledge, and technical breadth to be the on-the-ground support needed in the face of recent travel restrictions.

Between our China staff, we have experience in supplier management, supplier audits, new product development, failure analysis, fracture mechanics, test and design automation, material testing and characterization, and quality control. Our engineers have industrial experience in consumer electronics, automotive and personal mobility, medical devices, construction, incident investigations, and litigation support. We have technical experience with semiconductors, optics, sensors and actuators, integrated circuits, printed circuit boards, battery technologies, adhesives and polymer science, metallurgy and corrosion, thermal sciences, mechanical design, chemical regulation, and food safety.

References:

- CDC recommends suspending all non-essential travel to China (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>)
- Entering the united states – citizens and foreign residents. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/from-china.html>)
- Major airlines have cancelled all flights to and from China through April (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2020/02/11/american-airlines-extends-china-flight-cancellations-through-april/>)
- British airways (<https://www.theverge.com/2020/1/29/21113166/british-airways-coronavirus-flights-suspended-mainland-china>)
- Two-thirds of all international travel from China have been cancelled due to the coronavirus outbreak (<https://qz.com/1800024/two-thirds-of-chinas-international-flights-canceled-amid-coronavirus-outbreak/>)



Daniel J. Vasquez, Ph.D.

Electrical Engineering & Computer Science
Principal & Office Director
Shanghai

+86 21 3115 7875 | dvasquez@exponent.com

Alexandria | Atlanta | Austin | Bowie | Chicago | Denver | Detroit |
Houston | Irvine | Los Angeles | Maynard | Menlo Park |
Miami | Natick | New York | Oakland | Pasadena | Philadelphia |
Phoenix | Sacramento | Seattle | Warrenton | Washington D.C. |
United Kingdom | Switzerland | China | Singapore

www.exponent.com