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Tariffs & Product Quality:

Why Manufacturing Moves May Fail Your Customers

As U.S. tariffs on foreign goods continue to shift, companies are rapidly relocating manufacturing to countries like Mexico, India, and Vietnam. While these decisions make sense financially, they can quietly disrupt product quality, performance, and customer trust.

What often gets overlooked? The product may not change on paper, but the reality of how it's built, and how it behaves, absolutely can.

Key Findings

- Over 90% of North American manufacturers have shifted at least some production away from China (BCG, 2023)
- In 2023, manufacturing defects became the #1 cause of recalls in the U.S. (Sedgwick Recall Index, 2023)
- Most manufacturing transitions are led by finance or operations, with limited involvement from product or quality leaders (Centercode client interviews, 2025)

Four Pitfalls to Avoid When Shifting Manufacturers

These aren't edge cases or isolated anecdotes. They are consistent, systemic risks we've seen across dozens of manufacturing transitions. What seems like a straightforward vendor or factory change often introduces subtle but meaningful differences in how products are built, validated, and experienced by customers.

The four pitfalls below are the most common and costly when tariff-driven moves are treated as operational shifts rather than product risks.

1. **New Components**: Regional sourcing can swap key parts, even if they meet spec
2. **Process Variance**: Assembly, testing, and handling methods may differ subtly between facilities
3. **Environmental Factors**: Humidity, temperature, and infrastructure inconsistencies can impact long-term performance
4. **People**: Different training, tools, and quality standards across teams

These changes often pass internal QA checks but show up as problems in real-world conditions.

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Avoiding the Real Risks of a Manufacturing Move

Checklist

Before you greenlight production from a new facility, take a moment to zoom out. What seems like a clean vendor transition on paper often introduces subtle changes that slip past internal QA but show up later in customer support, returns, or review scores. This checklist helps cross-functional teams pressure-test readiness from both a quality and customer experience perspective.

Before You Launch From a New Facility

- [ ] Have we confirmed what's actually changing beyond just the factory name? What about components, processes, and people?
- [ ] Have we tested the product in real-world conditions, across varied environments, not just in a lab?
- [ ] Are all departments (support, UX, marketing, and sales) aware of the shift and aligned on customer-facing expectations?
- [ ] What would we learn from a structured beta or field test that QA might miss?
- [ ] Who owns the final call on product readiness? Does that include performance, perception, and real-world usage?
- [ ] Have we validated regional components or substitutions perform consistently with previous versions?
- [ ] Has the product been evaluated by users in the target market, using it in realistic scenarios?
- [ ] Have we captured early user feedback and behavior patterns that could highlight unforeseen issues?
- [ ] Is there a plan for escalating, analyzing, and addressing issues that surface in early production runs?
- [ ] Are we measuring quality through the lens of the customer? Beyond technical compliance, are we measuring experience, trust, and brand alignment?

How Centercode Helps

Confidence in Every Shift

When manufacturing moves, the risk moves with it. But the resources to catch that risk often don't. Product and QA leaders are left to validate critical changes they didn't initiate, under timelines they didn't set, using tools that weren't built for this kind of shift.

Centercode fills that gap. It surfaces what QA misses, highlights what matters, and gives your team the confidence to move forward without guesswork.



Capture Real-World Product Behavior

Centercode's feedback system captures real world sentiment and video recordings from testers using your product. You'll see exactly how they interact with it, where they struggle, and what goes unnoticed in static feedback.



Uncover the Hidden Risks of Component Changes

Test compatibility and integrations by using AI generated surveys and test activities created by **Ted AI** to probe for unintended side effects. Centercode guides testers through tasks designed to surface subtle differences in performance, feel, and reliability.



Speed Up Go/No-Go Calls with Prioritized Insights

Centercode automatically analyzes end user feedback, highlights trends, and surfaces top issues. No more guessing what matters. You get **ranked insights** ready for review by engineering, product, and execs.



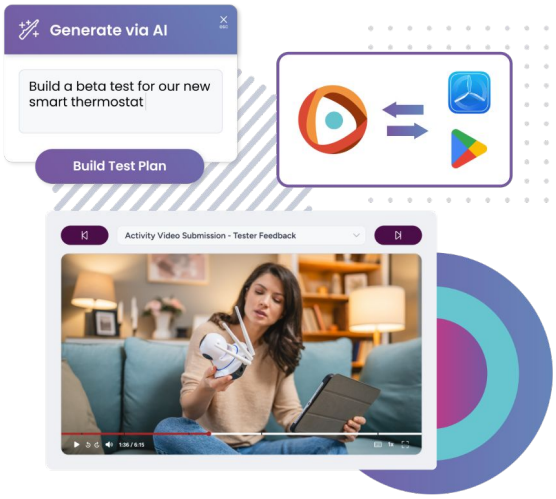
Keep Everyone Aligned Without Email Chains

Centercode centralizes everything—feedback, analytics, and recordings—in one **dashboard**. Everyone sees the same results in real time, without waiting for roll-up reports.

Why This Matters

- → Catch quality gaps before they reach your customers
- → Protect your reputation after a manufacturing change
- → Replace firefighting with real foresight
- → Validate your next shift like it's a relaunch, because *it is*

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What is Centercode?

We help companies engage directly with their audiences to build amazing products.

1. User Testing Platform

Automated user testing designed to meet the demanding needs of modern development

2. Tester Network

300,000+ members worldwide
Access to millions via personal networks

3. User Testing Services

Expert test management/support services
Project-based or dedicated annual programs

4. Education & Research

Hundreds of materials and assets freely available
Consistent global domain research published

Why use Centercode?

Increase Revenue

½ ⭐ **INCREASE**

in product rating

Gain Participation

75% INCREASE

in tester engagement

Release Sooner

50% FASTER

test cycles

Save Time

40% DECREASE

in testing time

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Kidde, SmartThings, Charter COMMUNICATIONS, BlackBerry, arlo, Master Lock, SONOS, AVID, Collibra, LEVITON
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