

THE IMITATION GAME

EQUIPMENT • A FAKE ROLEX WILL NOT WORK LIKE A REAL ROLEX SO WHY SHOULD IT BE ANY DIFFERENT WITH TANK TRUCK PUMPS? THOMAS L STONE EXPLAINS

FLEET MANAGERS ARE constantly walking a tightrope when it comes to deciding how to outfit their rolling stock. Take the truck pumps that a fuel oil distributor, for example, will choose to place on his vehicles.

There are usually two choices: the industry-standard brand, one that has proven over

decades to be the best choice for the operation, or the imitation - one that promises performance similar to that of the industry leader but at a lower price.

Sometimes price is the deciding factor for the operator when selecting pumps. Brands that can point to better performance, longer

reliability and reduced maintenance costs are usually accompanied by a slightly higher purchase price. In these days when budgets are tight and margins can get squeezed, having to pay a little more upfront can be a tough choice to make. That's when the operator may fall prey to the Siren song of lower purchase price, with a promise of equal performance.

Some fleet operators may decide to go with the cheaper or 'knockoff' version of the pump. While offering a lower initial cost, this decision will often lead to higher total costs and compromised return on investment throughout the pump's operational life cycle. These higher costs will manifest themselves in increased maintenance expense and downtime, which can also do damage to the reputation of the fleet company and result in lost business.

WRONG TURN TAKEN

One operator who was tempted by a lower price was Tank Truck Sales & Service of Warren, Michigan. When Gary Bulzan, owner of one of the firm's best customers, Ohio-based Chardon Oil, came to Tank Truck Sales & Service to let president Dave Lawler know he was in the market for a new delivery vehicle, Lawler made a fateful decision.

"We tried an off-brand pump," admits Lawler. "We had been using Blackmer® pumps for years, since the 1940s and 1950s, but we strayed away from them to try an off-brand pump this one time."

The supplier of the off-brand pump claimed that it would perform just as well as the Blackmer TX Series sliding vane pumps that Lawler was used to; indeed, it performed for three years but that came to an end suddenly one day when Bulzan was making a delivery.

"It was a catastrophic failure," says Bulzan. "I was making a delivery and it just quit and leaked all over the place."

When the pump was taken apart, it was not only leaking, "it was totally destroyed," according to Lawler. To make matters worse, the pump had just come out of warranty and



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the manufacturer would not replace it, despite the fact that it was totally destroyed.

Bulzan replaced the ruined pump with a Blackmer TX Series model and it has operated without a hiccup. In the end, Bulzan emerged with not only a pump that works to expectations, but with a new mantra when it comes to acquiring pumps for his fleet: "We're done with trying the other ones."

PRODUCT CONFIDENCE

Blackmer is confident its pumps out-perform cheaper imitations. To combat the claims made by some manufacturers that their imitation versions of TX Series pumps perform as reliably, safely and efficiently as the original, Blackmer launched the "TX Strong" website (www.blackmer.com/txstrong).

The major claim of knockoff manufacturers is that their models cost less than TX Series pumps, but that initial cost saving is gobbled up by the hidden costs of frequent mechanical failures and resulting repairs or replacement.

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The fulcrum of the TX Strong website is a video that evaluates TX Series pumps against imitation brands in a number of lab tests, the results of which prove conclusively the superiority of the TX pumps. The video shows that Blackmer TX pumps deliver lower cost of ownership that is ensured by the pump's genuine long-lasting parts and components.

Blackmer stands behind the performance of the TX Series pumps with a five-year standard warranty and two-year performance assurance guarantee. "A cheaper alternative may save a few dollars up front, but when that knockoff pump stops working, the loss in reputation and customer loyalty can be incalculable," Blackmer says. **HCB**

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More information on Blackmer rotary vane and centrifugal pumps and reciprocating gas compressors can be found at www.blackmer.com.