



## The Buyer's Dilemma

*Fleet operators choose between industry standard equipment and lower-priced imitations*

By Thomas L. Stone, Blackmer

### FLEET MANAGERS ARE CONSTANTLY WALKING

a tightrope when it comes to deciding how to outfit their rolling stock. Take, for example, the truck pumps that a fuel-oil distributor 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.

Sometimes, the deciding factor for the operator when selecting pumps is price. 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 oftentimes 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.

### LIVE AND LEARN

Tank Truck Service & Sales, of Warren, Mich., is a third-generation, family-operated business that has been a manufacturer,

assembler and distributor of tank trucks for nearly 70 years. One of Tank Truck Service & Sales' best customers is Chardon Oil, of Chardon, Ohio, a distributor of home heating oil, gasoline and motor oils to a customer base in northeastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania since 1981.

In 2010, Gary Bulzan, the owner of Chardon Oil, let Dave Lawler, President of Tank Truck Service & Sales, know that he was in the market for a new delivery truck—and Lawler made a fateful decision. "We tried an off-brand pump," admitted 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."

Though the off-brand pump—which claimed to be the equal of TX Series Sliding Vane Pumps from Blackmer, of Grand Rapids, Mich.—performed for three years, that came to an end suddenly one day when Bulzan was making a delivery. "It was a catastrophic failure," said 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 the manufacturer would not replace it, despite the fact that it was inoperable.

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."

### THE SOLUTION

Blackmer TX Series pumps outperform the knockoffs. 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](http://www.blackmer.com/txstrong)), where it explains the difference in pumps. The major claim of knockoff manufacturers is that their models cost less than TX Series pumps, but that initial cost savings is gobbled up by the hidden costs of frequent mechanical failures and resulting repairs or replacement.

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's 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.

Everyone has been burned when they've bought a cheaper imitation of an industry-standard product. The mistake that was made becomes reality when that cheaper alternative fails, leading to the purchase of a replacement, which oftentimes is the brand that should have been bought initially. 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. ■