

Processes That Protect

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In the past two posts of this three-part series, we've looked at distributors' use of technologies and industry support to hamper the efforts of counterfeiters. While leveraging state-of-the-art equipment such as X-ray and decapsulation machinery, and aligning with like-minded organizations such as the Independent Distributors of Electronics Association (IDEA) fuels the fight against counterfeiters, there's always more that can be done.

Quality inspection practices continue to take center stage in the identification of fake parts. Within an inspection process, distributors should weigh results from anti-counterfeit technologies and communicate with industry associations to ensure the compliance of parts. Manufacturers should also look to distributors that follow strict process control as in those certified by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), for example. Barcode labels, country of origin stamps, lead lines, spacing, marking permanency, and the presence of corrosion or residue should also be carefully considered.

Savvy distributors will also employ a vendor rating system that offers an account of previous vendor engagements. In the sourcing of new vendors, manufacturers should only work with distributors who request existing customer data as well as share their financials. Site visits can also be employed. Histories aren't built overnight, which is why baseline information is so critical. Once a relationship is established, and parts are sourced on a regular basis, a rating can be assigned as electronic components come in. By scoring each batch of products, distributors can better learn which vendors are most reliable. Validation should be set against internal datasheets as well as industry databases.

Manufacturers should use only reliable distributors who procure and sell passive components that have full traceability back to the manufacturer, guaranteed and documented, and strive to achieve 100% traceability on all the parts they sell. And, inspection processes should involve a team of experts possessing years of on-the-job training. There is no technology that can replace real job know-how.

Finally, seek out distributors that put their money where their mouths are by offering anti-counterfeit insurance - some policies pay up to \$10M. And, a legitimate distributor should have no problem with you visiting the facility to have a "look

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under the hood” and conduct your own audit.

Parts are sourced by thousands of vendors worldwide. The global footprint makes it more important than ever to know as much about where parts are coming from as where they are going. In the fight against counterfeiters only “as near to real-time” market intelligence will triumph.

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