



Balancing Compatibles -vs- OEMs

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Many copier and printer dealers have learned over the years that a low-priced product isn't always a low-cost product. Products that don't work properly, regardless of their price, can quickly increase an organizations' service costs and hurt the bottom line.

While some manufacturers have found creative ways to take costs out of their products, their solutions are not always in the best interests of their customers, or the industry as a whole. Lately there have been numerous reports about product problems that have caused serious damage and expensive product recalls for customers, distributors and manufacturers alike. Left unchecked, the desire to produce a cheaper product, along with the need to sell a cheaper product, can create a situation that can end up being costly to your bottom line and, perhaps more importantly, damaging to your reputation.

So what should you be doing in today's environment where so many products are so readily available from so many different suppliers? Should you limit your spares purchases to higher cost products from your original equipment manufacturer (OEM), or should you source product from multiple vendors to "protect yourself" in case you have a product issue? Certainly the original equipment manufacturer is a proven resource, but they've been known to have product issues too, so an OEM-only approach for parts and supplies may not be your best option, regardless of the rebate and discount incentives they offer. Also, in today's market a big OEM can also be your big competitor, so once again an OEM-only approach may not be in your best interest. Often, the best approach for purchasing spare parts and supplies is a balanced approach that allows you to optimize your profitability and lower your risk by working with your OEM and a trusted compatibles supplier. Listed below are some recommendations for establishing and maintaining a balanced approach to purchasing spare parts and supplies.

A Balanced Approach Check List

1. Determine up front what percent of your purchases you would consider buying from a trusted independent, compatibles supplier.
2. Take the time to learn more about your options - the people and the companies offering compatible products. What's their experience and reputation? Can you check references or get recommendations? Remember the old saying, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". This is important, so do your homework.

3. Know the philosophy and the focus of your alternative supplier. Are they looking out for your interests, or do they have other priorities?
4. Do they have experienced sales people who understand your business and your needs? Talk to them. Find out what they think about the company they're working for.
5. Are they efficient, flexible and easy to do business with?
6. Do you feel comfortable they will support you if there is a problem? Are they dependable, and will they do what they say they will do?
7. Finally, if you haven't done so already, you may want to consider subscribing to an independent benchmarking services company to help you better understand your costs and the opportunities you have to improve your performance.

If you are satisfied with the results of your findings after going through this checklist, you will probably be satisfied buying compatible products from a trusted, independent supplier of your choice. Remember, there are many different sources for compatible products. Do your homework. Make sure you've selected someone who is willing to work on your behalf to see you grow and succeed.

Q2, LLC specializes in the development, marketing, sales & distribution of quality compatible replacement parts for use in copier, printer and multifunction machines. The management team includes Neal Becker, Jane O'Brien and Joe Steinberg, bringing 70+ years of industry experience. At 888-826-2576 and www.q2products.com.

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