

## The Problems with Copies

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**T**here is a saying, “The sincerest form of flattery is imitation.” Trouble is, though, that quite often the imitation doesn’t match the original. Consider a photocopy of a document. It isn’t quite the same. It might be a little smaller or a little larger, or maybe the colour doesn’t come through quite as it should. It’s just not the same as the original.

look the same, but they aren’t equal, unless the manufacturers can provide to you test reports and quality control certification that the products are being consistently made TO THE SAME specification as those certified initially.

I once purchased a container-load of one of our company’s products from a supplier overseas (not China!). The samples provided to us were perfect. So I accepted that the products could be made from a particular steel alloy. When we got them onto a jobsite, we found that they did not support the loads we intended to put on them.

On further investigation, we found that the alloy I had approved had a wide range of values for Yield Strength. The prototype samples were made from the high-end of the alloy, while the production units were made from the LOW END. WE HAD NO COME-BACK, BECAUSE I HAD APPROVED THE USE OF that alloy.

This little anecdote is just to let you know that, just because a product looks the same, doesn’t mean it performs the same. The Romans had the right attitude toward this type of thing – Caveat emptor – Buyer beware!

The name-brand companies have markings on their products that identify where they came from and when they were made. If there should be a failure, the companies will first of all look for their product identification. If it isn’t there, they can step back and say, “It isn’t ours.” Then any liability involved does not come back to them. It goes to the company that purchased the copy.

There are good versions of everyone’s products in the marketplace today. But if the price looks to be extremely attractive, there might be something wrong. A truck that goes around our neighbourhood from time to time has a sign on it – “The bitterness of poor quality lingers long after the sweetness of low price is forgotten.”

So if you want to purchase a lower-cost version of a known product, be sure you know what you’re getting into.

‘Way back in 1942 and ever since, Coca-Cola has been spending a great deal of money promoting their product as “the Real Thing.” Similarly, name-brand manufacturers of scaffolding, shoring, and forming equipment have spent enormous amounts of time and money to develop what they consider to be the best products in the industry.

After World War 2, we saw great numbers of Japanese “tourists” going around with cameras slung around their necks taking pictures of just about everything in sight. Then we got all sorts of cheap imitations of a lot of products. In those days, we would turn over a “Souvenir of Niagara Falls” and read “Made in Japan.”

Today we get all sorts of products that turn out to be “Made in China” or other places. Certainly, not all Chinese or third-world products are inferior. Many of our name-brand manufacturers are having versions of their products manufactured in China or in developing countries, under their own designs and quality programs. These products will be identified with the name-brand manufacturers’ colours, symbols, and stickers. No doubt about it, these are “the real thing.”

The same thing about copies applies to scaffolding. A company I once worked for copied another company’s product, mainly so that it would work along with the other company’s equipment. We kept trying to match the capacity of the other product. We were always achieving less in our testing than we WANTED. WE wanted to be equal to or better than “the other guys.” But their product was always stronger. Until we found out a manufacturing trick that we had never considered before Then we were just as strong.

The same goes now for products being produced by companies other than the “name brand” companies. Generally, the copies



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