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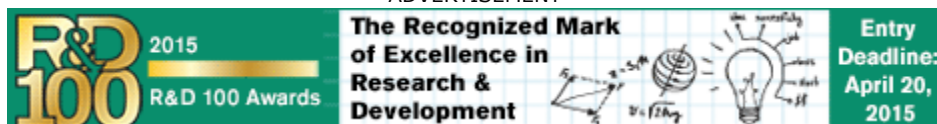
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# What's the best defense against component counterfeiting?

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**David Bagby, President and CEO, Alliance Memory**

Counterfeiting is a problem that our customers are certainly worried about, but it's also a problem for which there are no easy answers. As a supplier of legacy DRAMs and SRAMs, I always advise customers that their best choice is to buy only from a franchised distributor or directly from us and to steer clear of seemingly better deals from brokers they don't know well. Unfortunately customers for legacy devices are often desperate to get parts that can help them to avoid a costly redesign and might be tempted by such offers. Identifying counterfeit devices isn't easy. Physical inspection might indicate a part has been re-marked, but there are legitimate reasons for re-marking parts, and testing every part to be sure it has the stated lead content or electrical specifications isn't usually an option. For all these reasons, the best and only real defense against counterfeiting, wherever you are in the supply chain, is to stick with distributors that have a long track record, work directly with component manufacturers when that makes sense, and never

make a component buying decision on the basis of price only.



**Ed Smith, President, Avnet Electronics Marketing Americas**

If we were to do a root cause analysis of the counterfeit component crisis in the electronics supply chain, I think we would find that while sourcing outside the authorized channel and the blatant disregard of criminals for intellectual property rights are significant contributors to the problem, the root cause is actually part availability – or the lack thereof. We know this from experience, and a recent ECN poll further supports this notion. Seventy percent survey respondents cited some form of part availability issue as the reason for sourcing from unknown or unreliable parts brokers, from whom there is an extremely high probability of receiving counterfeit, remarked or substandard parts. Therefore, it stands to reason that the appropriate corrective action is to assure that your BOM is not compromised by part availability - easier said than done. However, OEMs can significantly mitigate this risk through better/more proactive BOM management, particularly in the earliest phases of the design process. Time and again, we hear stories from purchasing and supply chain folks about the trials they face in trying to source hard-to-find components specified by engineers who considered only the part technology and not its lifecycle status, whether it is single sourced, in high demand or produced in a high-risk region. It's time to break down the silos and actively engage supply chain/materials management professionals and/or your distribution partner in the new product development process in order to expand the product design criteria from basic form, fit and function to include the plethora of supply chain considerations that can impact part availability. This design for supply chain (DfSC) approach can not only mitigate counterfeit risk, but enable OEMs to reduce costs, increase revenue and achieve more consistent customer satisfaction.

**Tom Grace, brand protection manager, Eaton's Electrical Sector Americas**

The best defense against component counterfeiting is to always buy authentic. Purchasing products directly from a manufacturer's authorized distributors and resellers ensures that the product being purchased is, in fact, genuine. There is a higher risk of counterfeits if you cannot trace the path of commerce to the original manufacturer.



As counterfeiters become more and more sophisticated, unsafe lookalike products are becoming more prevalent and harder to detect. To help electrical industry professionals detect counterfeit products, many manufacturers and certification organizations provide verification tools.

If a product is suspected to be counterfeit, it is vital to report it. By reporting a suspect product to the original manufacturer or brand owner, professionals can find out whether or not the product is authentic. If there is a discrepancy, this reporting process will help ensure the potentially dangerous device is removed from the marketplace.

In the event the original manufacturer's contact information is unavailable, professionals can always contact the IPR Center, which disseminates the information for appropriate response.



**Clay Parril, Electrocube**

Electrocube first became aware of counterfeit parts when a distributor tried to return them. It was clear from the identification (ID) stamp that the part was not ours. Ironically, our first reaction was complimentary. We had components worth counterfeiting. To prevent future counterfeiting, we sent notice to our distributor network to watch for Electrocube parts where the ID stamp does not match our known parts, as well as perform diligent review of all returned parts and Internet parts for sale. This is the only instance of which we're aware.