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OEM PARTS ANSWER THE CALL FOR OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE

Exploring the issues surrounding OEM versus generic



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The discussion on the value of Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) parts versus generic, or aftermarket, parts has been going on for decades. On one side of the debate, manufacturers and OEM proponents believe that original parts are essential for superior, safe performance, securing warranty compliance, and maximizing performance throughout the equipment's life cycle.

Key considerations when comparing OEM parts vs. generic parts:

- Food safety
- Employee safety
- Equipment lifecycle
- Warranty
- Agency approvals
- Energy efficiency

Not Apples to Apples

Generic part advocates argue that aftermarket parts are essentially the same as originals at a reduced cost. However, after reviewing the strengths and benefits of each, any initial cost savings achieved by using generic parts may end up costing much more in the long run due to warranty suspension, inability to meet third-party safety standards, creating employee safety issues and, ultimately, a shortened equipment life cycle.

For example, if a generic spare part functions at 95% of the original part's efficiency, has a lifespan rated at 80% of the OEM part while costing 20% less, end users risk losing thousands of dollars due in unit downtime while spending more in utilities to operate.

Critical Support

OEM parts are essential for supporting critical equipment operations. There may be times when non-critical parts may be replaced with generics without compromising a warranty; however, it's always best to discuss with your service agent or the manufacturer prior to making those decisions.

Use of non-OEM parts may also cause end users to forfeit all remaining warranties on the entire piece of equipment—not just limited warranties, but lifetime warranties are also in jeopardy. Even items such as belts and screws may have specific requirements because they impact the function of parts supporting critical functions. Ultimately, price alone should never be the only factor in determining which parts you choose.

THE VALUE OF SERVICE/MAINTENANCE

To obtain the best performance, equipment must be properly operated and maintained. Sound equipment maintenance and an ongoing relationship with an Authorized Service Agent (ASA) helps ensure that equipment functions at maximum efficiency for the balance of its life cycle. Consider maintenance and service as a contribution to positive output, which can positively impact your bottom line.

The key to good service is preventive maintenance including ongoing functional assessments. Your ASA can help guide you in your overall maintenance program, identifying and correcting issues before they become problems. They will also help you find the right parts to ensure warranty and safety compliance. Again, while not every single part requires OEM replacement, your service agent will guide you on which parts are critical to safe operation and thus require manufacturer specified replacement.

“We’ve been an OEM parts distributor from the beginning,” says John Schwindt, Vice President of Operations and General Manager for Hawkins Commercial Appliance, a Denver-based factory-authorized service and parts center. “We place great value on that because an authorized agent has direct communication with the factory and the manufacturer. We receive updated parts information, bulletins and service updates on a regular basis—so you feel like you’re right on the front burner.”

ASA Assurance

Using an ASA is the best way to ensure service is performed using only OEM parts. During the authorization process, ASAs are trained and audited by the original manufacturer, and are held accountable for using only parts that have been inspected to meet the design criteria for each specific piece of equipment. Also, when upgrades and changes are made to specifications, ASAs are immediately alerted. Non-certified service agents would be unaware of such changes, which could dramatically affect the performance of your equipment.

“When a manufacturer changes or upgrades a part,” says Steve Snower, President of Parts Town, a major genuine OEM parts and service business located outside Chicago, “The ASA network is updated immediately and those agents will know to upgrade or switch. Generic companies just won’t have that information and may continue to sell a part that’s no longer optimal, or was never optimal in the first place. Your ASA also has direct communication with the factory and receives training on specific lines of equipment, in addition to regular updates from manufacturers. It’s also in an operator’s best interest to work with an ASA to fully activate the warranty. They will always guide you in directions that preserve the warranty and ensure the equipment operates to its highest potential.”

The ultimate goal of any maintenance program is to avoid downtime and maximize efficiency and proper functioning. The benefits are many, including peace of mind, but the bottom line is that proper maintenance and service will help you maximize profits.



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“The most important thing when it comes to servicing equipment,” Snower explains, “is that it’s fixed right. The ASA is in the best possible position to make that happen because of training, OEM parts, understanding of warranty preservation, direct communication with the manufacturer on upgrades and changes, and the fact that they continually hone and refine their understanding and experience with specific lines of equipment.”

OEM VERSUS GENERIC

“During the course of equipment ownership, the need to service and replace parts is inevitable,” says Mike Buelow, vice president of service for Manitowoc Foodservice.

“Businesses are already challenged to deliver maximum profits and, with a slow economy, saving dollars becomes an everyday quest. It’s tempting to use generic or aftermarket parts because they can be cheaper—at least initially. What customers need to know is that OEM parts deliver a variety of benefits that generics can’t touch.”

A top benefit, according to Buelow, is that the original manufacturer designed and created the equipment and, therefore, understands it best. The fact that engineers, quality control, and manufacturing specialists are involved in managing the original equipment specifications means they are uniquely qualified to determine the optimal parts for maintaining and servicing. “We’re the only source that understands, from start to finish, how every piece of technology works together. We know how all parts orchestrate to create the desired outcome and how best to optimally maintain those. OEM parts are built to manufacturer specifications, something generic parts can’t claim.”

Creating Positive Service Experiences

“In addition,” Buelow says, “Specifications may change over time, based on new research and technology—information a non-certified service agent simply won’t have. They also lack our insight into each piece of equipment, its design, the nuances of manufacturing and maintaining peak performance. We are intimately familiar with all aspects of our equipment and have a vested interest in creating positive experiences for our customers.”

According to Buelow, using OEM parts ensures that a piece of equipment is maintained to specification and, therefore, is in the best position to deliver top results, including efficient energy use. In addition, using generic parts may invalidate any remaining manufacturer's warranties on the entire piece of equipment, creating issues related to fire and employee safety because the equipment isn't being kept up to spec.

Tina Reese, General Manager for Commercial Appliance Parts & Service, a Tampa-based OEM parts and service company, agrees. "Using a generic part can open an operator to liability. For example, if someone, other than an authorized service agent, has gone in and made repairs using a generic part and a fire occurs because it no longer works properly, it could open the operator to liability. And you wouldn't be aware of it until something happened. And at that point, it's too late."

"It's easy to be intrigued by an alternative part that's cheaper," Buelow says. "The problem is generic parts aren't identical to manufacturer specifications. That means they often must be adjusted in order to make them fit, which creates problems. It can open an operator to a wide range of liability issues in the long run." By choosing only OEM parts, operators can protect themselves for the increased liability that occurs when generic parts compromise the safety of the equipment.

Reese also cautions against using other manufacturer's OEM parts and believing they're covered under warranty. "There are two types of generic parts, both of which will invalidate a warranty. One is simply generic in construction and isn't inspected nor endorsed by the original manufacturer. The other is when someone uses a part that is, indeed, tested and approved by a manufacturer; however not the manufacturer who made the equipment. Just because it looks the same and performs the same function and has a recognized brand name, doesn't mean it fits original manufacturer specification."

Supporting Food Safety

Food safety is another major reason Buelow says OEM parts are covered by manufacturer warranty. "If alternative parts offset the voltage or amperage on a piece of cooking equipment, there's a chance the equipment won't cook food to the correct temperatures anymore. Many schools and healthcare institutions require the use of OEM parts for this reason since they feed children and other high-risk populations."

"Manufacturers modify parts to meet the specific needs of their equipment," Schwindt says. They may put a special coating on heat switches or other elements that are designed to operate in certain environments. So if you use a generic version, it won't have those modifications, which may totally reverse the functionality of the equipment, opening the operator and service agent to liability. That's the biggest reason we deal only in OEM parts."

Another OEM benefit is the ongoing relationship between the manufacturer, service agent and operator. A piece of equipment can go through many evolutions and changes during its life cycle. Because they're not involved in the research and development process, generic part manufacturers won't be aware of these nuances. This can lead to parts that jeopardize critical functioning and put operators at risk for malfunctions and safety issues potentially affecting employees and customers.

Not All Created Equal

Another pratfall to avoid is generic replacement parts being touted as “essentially the same as those sold by manufacturers.” OEM parts are the only way to ensure the equipment you invested in stays in its original, top-working condition. For safety, liability protection, energy efficiency, and to maintain agency approval ratings, replacement with OEM parts is critical.

OEM VERSUS GENERIC AT A GLANCE

	<u>OEM</u>	<u>Generic</u>
Built to manufacturer specification	✓	
Integration and performance tested	✓	
Possibly lower cost option		✓
Guaranteed to perform as expected	✓	
Supported by CFESA*	✓	
Best maintains integrity of critical systems	✓	
Assists in meeting 3 rd -party safety compliance	✓	

*Commercial Food Equipment Service Association

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR SERVICE

A recent feature in *Foodservice Equipment & Supplies* explored the future of the foodservice industry. An esteemed panel of foodservice industry professionals, representing associations, manufacturers, service agents and operators, presented a variety of ideas that may impact the way we approach service and maintenance over the next 20 years.

- Service relationships will be imperative in an age of electronic communications. The isolative nature of electronic contact will make personalized service even more important.
- Technology will continue to drive equipment efficiencies and new functionality. This, in turn, will impact service, elevating the importance of understanding higher technological functions, as well as nuts and bolts operations.
- Data collection will fast become one of the service agent's core competencies, as manufacturers continue to ask agents to have data readily available to help customers identify equipment life cycle costs.

Rick Caron, chief technology officer for Manitowoc Foodservice, adds, "New high-performance equipment will enable restaurateurs to deliver more menu items with less labor, in less space and in less time. The advancement of high-performance technology means equipment will continually be upgraded, similar to personal computing technology."

As one explores the possible future scenarios, it's impossible to ignore the impact technology and research will have on all types of equipment, reinforcing the point that manufacturers are best suited for understanding these changes and their potential implications.

THE MANITOWOC FOODSERVICE STAR SERVICE

DIFFERENCE

When it comes to world-class equipment, global foodservice leader Manitowoc Foodservice understands that innovation, creation and distribution are just the beginning. Equally important is an ongoing service and maintenance program designed to keep equipment functioning at peak performance. Because service is such an important factor to ongoing customer satisfaction and equipment longevity, Manitowoc Foodservice created the STAR Service Network, which establishes best-in-class standards for its more than 500 strategically located domestic service centers.

These locations employ more than 5,000 trained service technicians, many of whom are certified as Master Technicians by the Commercial Food Equipment Service Association (CFESA). In addition to third-party recognition and certification standards, Manitowoc Foodservice requires that all technicians be recertified at least every three years to ensure they are up to date on the latest products, technology and repair procedures. Agents in the Manitowoc Foodservice STAR Network also agree to guarantee their parts and labor for a minimum of three months (90 days), and many offer extended warranty periods for parts and service.

Helping customers navigate the wide variety of choices when it comes to service was the main motivator when Manitowoc Foodservice created its STAR service program. The program has two key stipulations that contribute to its overall success. One of those is an OEM stock policy, meaning that service centers must stock OEM parts for all pieces of equipment for which they're certified to repair. The second is maintaining a national network of service centers that are accessible to customers.

In addition the Maniowoc Foodservice STAR service program offers a variety of beneficial features, which are highlighted on the STAR Service web portal at www.Manitowoc Foodserviceusa.com/service.

- Online zip-code search engine for finding the closest authorized service provider
- Online performance standard statistics and information
- A Reliable Install & Start-up by Maniowoc Foodservice (RISE) program that includes required site surveys by an Authorized Service Agent (ASA) prior to initiating work
- An Authorized Training Instructor (ATI) program that includes factory-authorized training conducted by ATIs at any of the ASA locations or online

As an added layer of quality assurance, Maniowoc Foodservice conducts annual audits to evaluate the performance of each authorized service agent and suggest specific improvements to enhance service capabilities. Those agents achieving, maintaining and improving audited certified capabilities are compensated at higher rates by Maniowoc Foodservice to reward service excellence.

For more information visit www.manitowocfsusa.com/service.