

Remanufactured and counterfeit consumables are bad for the environment - OKI

With awareness of environmental responsibility rising, yet another case for choosing genuine consumables over cheap remanufactured or fake alternatives is emerging. That's because printer ink and toner cartridges from original equipment manufacturers are assembled in facilities which are optimized for low emissions, enter a supply chain which is designed for sustainability and ultimately, at end of life, are recycled in an appropriate manner.

That's according to Martin Venter, general manager of Printacom Technologies, sole importers and distributors of OKI printers and consumables. "Apart from the benefits of buying original toner or ink cartridges which include substantially better yield and predictable quality print, it has emerged that there are environmental consequences associated with counterfeit or refilled toner and ink cartridges," he says.

Even so-called 'recycled' or 'remanufactured' consumables can be problematic. "If you thought recycled used toners will spare your conscience, think again. While it is certainly true that some recycling of toners and cartridges is better than no recycling at all, this industry has its problems," he says.

One of the more prominent issues is the export of used toners to third world countries (especially China) for remanufacturing. "What happens in practice is that cartridges themselves are seldom reused. Instead, they are swept of residual toner and then burned in unregulated facilities," Venter explains.

Workers have no protection gear and are exposed to dangerous fumes; Venter says the burning of cartridges emits dioxins and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, cancerous pollutants which seep into rivers and water tables, make their way into the food chain and which can affect all levels of species.

Continuing, Venter says the companies involved in what is something of a fringe industry, tend to have little structure or sustainable routes to market. "What that means for the consumer is that when something goes wrong, there is no support and no recourse. It is very much a case of 'caveat emptor', buyer beware. For the channel, it means there is no foresight on building reciprocal value chains which ensure long term viability."

While conceding that OEM consumables do cost more, Venter says the pricing is not unreasonable. "The technology which is required to create superb, vibrant images is contained not only in the printer, but in the consumable too. The toner and ink cartridges are complex, intricate and very difficult to produce; when manufactured to appropriate standards and with a supply chain which is geared to ensure that toxic components are recovered responsibly at end-of-life," he explains.

Furthermore, Venter says it is only possible for OKI to offer its unique 3-year onsite warranty if genuine OKI consumables are used. "If remanufactured or counterfeit products are used, we have no way of predicting the outcome of usage; since toner is such an integral component of the final printed image, it is only possible to extend this warranty when we know what is passing through the machine," he explains.

The principle espoused in the Afrikaans saying 'goedkoop is duurkoop' applies, Venter continues. "The cheap alternative can ruin your printer. It will not deliver the same quality print, which defeats the object of buying a modern, performance machine. And it won't deliver the same number of pages as an OEM part will."

About Printacom

Printacom Technologies, a member of the MB Technologies group of companies is the sole authorised vendor of the OKI Printing Solutions, TallyGenicom and Tally Dascom Line Printers brands of printer and printer consumables in South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa including the Southern African Development Countries (SADC) region.

The Tally Genicom range of line matrix technology is supplied by Printronix, while thermal and dot matrix printing by Dascom.

Ranked among the top three printer brands worldwide with representation in 120 countries worldwide, OKI Printing Solutions specialises in designing, developing, manufacturing and marketing business printing solutions which empower organisations to communicate more effectively. More information about OKI is available at: <http://www.OKISA.co.za>

MB Technologies is a member of the Royal Bafokeng Group of Companies.

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