

Warranties Exposed!

Remember, we promised you we would write this series of articles, one per month, so as they could be read over a single cup of coffee. So sit back and relax, but be prepared to be shocked!

You are responsible for specifying the right product and your clients pays you a fee to know what I am about to tell you in this article. In fairness to you, you would need to spend a lot of time to search hard and dig deep for this information, as this information is not always easy to find. But it does exist.

20 year, 25 year or lifetime warranty...take your pick!

...they all mean nothing, unless they contain the right words. You think your company has received a warranty and therefore you think you have protected your client (and your company) from poor quality products and you think the same warranty 'guarantees' compliance to the standards...think again!

Consider this...**the person issuing the warranty is the manufacturer and he will protect himself...not your client.**

We know why some manufacturers do this, but how do they do it and how do they get away with it.

How...by making very clever statements, that look good at first glance, but the devil is in the detail, for example, they may make:

- Reference to Category 6 compliance, stating correct EIA/TIA or ISO/IEC references but going on to state performances at 'specific' frequencies, rather than 'all' frequencies. This lets them off the hook at the frequencies where they fail to comply with the standards.
- Reference to 'margin over standards', 'typical performance', 'average worst case'...these statements look good but mean nothing
- Reference to independently tested by external laboratory. Again, this sounds good, but you may remember we have previously exposed the three ways of testing....two of which are worthless, the third way being the only worthwhile method of testing.

1/ **Self Testing** – Not worth the paper it's written on

2/ **Independently Testing a 'select' piece of product:** – This is where the manufacturer selects a few of his products and sends them to be tested. The problem here is that devious manufacturers can choose "select" components that will pass the test, but how can we be sure that the products he sells on the open market will pass the tests. So, this is also worthless.

3/ **Independently Tested – By a recognised lab (say UL).** This is the only test you can rely on, where the manufacturer instructs UL to purchase his products from any where in the world and test them. This is an acid test!

Continuing on with how manufacturers avoid issuing binding warranties, they make:

- Reference to 'installed by specially trained installer'...who are their trained installers, and is your installer one of them, if not, the warranty is worthless.
- Reference to 'there must be no adds, moves or changes'...if they can prove any of these took place, the warranty is worthless
- Reference to 'sites must be visited by warranty officer'...did one visit your site? If not, your warranty is meaningless.
- Reference to 'link' system. The warranty should make reference a 'channel' system. If not, it is worthless. Manufacturers sometimes use the work 'link' in their warranties, so as to exclude patch cords and desk cables, since their patch cords fail to meet the standards. What good is this warranty to your client, if it says the system 'only complies without the patch cords'!

These are some of the ways the manufacturer can issue a warranty, knowing full well, that if brought to court for non-performance, he has enough get-out clauses to wriggle off the hook.

How do you get a proper warranty?

Kedington will tell you. You must select a manufacturer that is in a position to guarantee performance by:

- Having their own test labs and secondly, by having their products fully tested properly (see above) by an independent, well known test house such as UL
- By selecting a *manufacturer* that manufactures **all** the products in the network and not a *distributor* that

puts together a mix of different products, from different manufacturers (you would be surprised which products fall into this category)

- By selecting a product with good in-country technical support and technical inspectors. Did you know that some manufacturers email their warranties to Ireland, having never visited the site that the warranty supposedly covers!
- By putting some simple items in your specification that prevents these bad practices (see our sample specification)

Ask us, we will tell you what manufacturers comply with the above.

What should be covered in a product warranty?:

- Manufacturing Defects
- Labour
- Reference to the 'right' standards, with no get-out clauses.
- Application support. This guarantees that the cable manufacturer will get involved in any problem your client might have with any software application he wants to run. He will not simply test the cable and walk away.
- The warranty must cover the full 'channel' including all network components and not a 'link' warranty which leaves out some components.

It almost goes without saying that a good specialist contractor would not land you in this mess. Did you know that some of these warranties can be downloaded off the internet! So maybe the warranty you have, the contractor that gave it to you and your client's site are not even known to the manufacturer that supposedly issued your warranty!

Finally, how do they get away with issuing these warranties...bottom line...they stick in clever get-out clauses...and some consultants make the mistake of accepting their products as equal and approved! Again, in fairness to you, these guys are devious. Let us share our research with you and help you navigate this minefield, - we will tell you which warranties will protect you and your client.

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