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Taking an Independent Path: Strategies for Low Risk Sourcing of Components in a Constrained Market

LED lighting industry looks to independent distributors to address chronic shortages in the availability of electronic components

Direct sourcing of electronic components for the LED lighting industry used to be pretty simple. An OEM would order direct from the manufacturer or through authorized distributors to obtain any required components. There was usually no need to look any further.

Today, the challenges of a highly stressed supply chain are forcing many LED OEMs to rethink the way they source components. With parts such as multi-layer ceramic capacitors (MLCCs) and other low-cost components in chronic shortage with extended lead times for delivery, manufacturers must be able to get these parts on-time at the lowest possible cost without assuming additional risk.

As a result, many are turning to independent or hybrid distributors for long lead-time parts. The primary caveat: the components must meet the specifications thereby avoiding compromising the integrity of the end product. In other words, LED lighting manufacturers want components that can be traced back to the original manufacturer.

For many companies, sourcing parts from the independent channel requires a significant shift in mindset. It also requires a comprehensive strategy for identifying and working with reliable independent stocking distributors to ensure they get components they need, when they need them.

“For LED manufacturers there has been harmony in the supply chain for most of the past decade, so the need to identify alternative suppliers has not been as pressing as it is now,” says Mike Thomas, vice president and global general manager at Classic Components, an independent distributor based in Torrance, CA. “That means many companies have not invested a lot of time or attention strategizing about how to use independent distribution channels effectively.

The process begins, he says, with understanding how to distinguish one independent distributor from another. This often comes down to a mixture of experience, reputation and the extent of the supplier’s global sup-





ply network. Therefore, it is critical to understand the quality management systems of your independent partners.

Know Your Source

According to Thomas, the mantra in his industry to eliminate risk is "know your source." To accomplish this, leading independent distributors invest millions to manage

global supply networks, rate/prioritize suppliers, establish preferred supplier relationships and acquire the latest inspection equipment and utilize effective Quality Management Systems (QMS).

"Over time, companies like ours have developed a very complex method of identifying and eliminating risk," says Thomas. "That includes knowing

how to inspect and test components that come in to our facility, but also goes well beyond that."

It also means analyzing and inspecting sources with an investigative diligence. What path did the parts take to get there? Who is the manufacturer and how is that relevant? Where was it made? How was it shipped and packaged? Is demand of a component strong enough to make its availability viable? Only thorough examination and assessment of all these factors, in conjunction with traceability, can the risk be truly mitigated.

"When we purchase components like MLCCs, for example, we are purchasing from a direct source," explains Thomas. "That could be a regional or foreign distributor, an OEM partner or direct from the factory."

To verify the chain of custody, traceability documentation can be provided that identifies the name and location of all the supply chain intermediaries from the part manufacturer to the direct source of the product. If this traceability is unavailable, a risk mitigation plan is required. Finally, visual inspection, testing and physical analysis are performed on all incoming products.

Purchasing Power

The truth is that many of the shortages were predicted some time ago. As a result, leading independent stocking distributors like Classic Components have spent the past few years engaged in a long-term strategy of identifying, and investing in, directly sourced critical electronic components.

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By doing this, independent distributors protect the supply, but are also able to lock in lower prices by making purchases before the inevitable changes driven by reduced supply and increased demand.

To protect high-volume orders, a distributor can lock in prices and delivery dates for many months at a time. This ensures that the inventory will be there when the customer needs it and not sold to someone else.

In some cases, they can even make speculative purchases for a customer and/or provide financing to purchase inventory when a qualified client has capital constraints.

Global Networks

Another direct source for high demand parts comes from tapping into a large global network. Because of the worldwide demand for components, independent distributors have

expanded globally and placed sourcing experts in key supply markets.

For example, in addition to its 60,000 square foot facility in Torrance, California, Classic Components has established 12 regional offices in strategic locations throughout the world to support its global distribution business. The company boasts nearly 200 employees, who specialize in various aspects of the business, including supply chain, quality, technology and logistics.

The buyers can develop an intimate knowledge of regional supply chains with the expertise to find and manage quality component suppliers. These experts then leverage these relationships to bring the best price and delivery to their customers.

“By using regional quality centers and logistic hubs, we have the flexibility to purchase components from

any country, in any currency, and then ship them to anywhere they are needed,” explains Thomas.

He gives the example of a customer in Mexico that wants components from Taiwan, due to availability. If the Taiwanese supplier will only sell to local companies, Classic Components can purchase the components from its satellite office located there. Later the stock can be transferred or sold to another branch office before it is ultimately delivered to the customer in Mexico.

Classic’s global logistics can also help to manage or avoid tariffs by shipping to and from our international hubs in Hong Kong and the UK.

Rigorous Vetting

Another way to ensure the reliability of the independent distributor is to ensure they are thoroughly vetted. Established companies are used to

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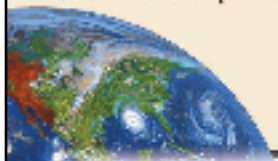
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complying with frequent requests for audits. In fact, some of the robustness of the quality systems implemented by independent distributors can be attributed to this activity.

Continuing Shortages

With significant shortages in many high usage electronic products needed in the LED lighting industry expected to continue for at least the next 2-3 years, the independent distributors' seat at the electronic components sourcing table has never been more relevant.

Through investment in developing deep global networks, inspection, authentication, inspection and quality systems, independent stocking distributors stand ready to provide LED lighting OEMs a robust option to navigate the white waters of international supply nimbly, effectively, and without the risk.

For more information, contact Classic Components Corp. 23605 Telo Avenue, Torrance, CA 90505; www.classic-ic.com; 310.539.5500; info@classic-ic.com.

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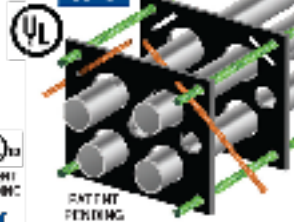


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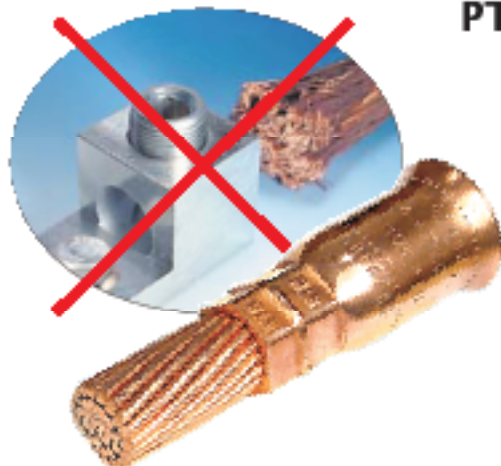
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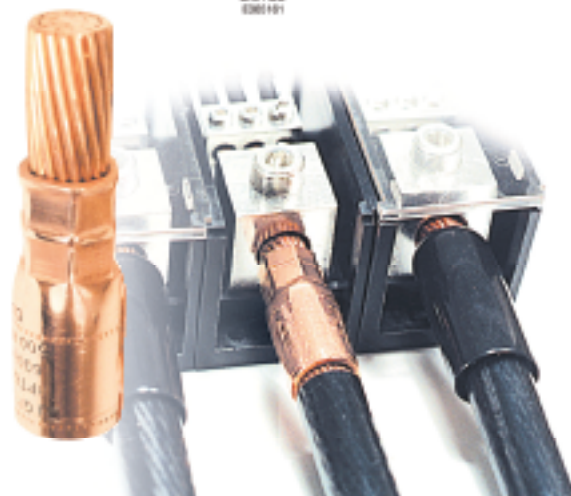
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Platinum Tools® Announces New Unloaded Patch Panels at the 2019 NAB & ISC West Shows; Now Available



Available in Shielded and Unshielded, and 24-Port and 48-Port Configurations

Platinum Tools®, the leader in solutions for the preparation, installation, hand termination and testing of wire and cable, is proud to announce the launch of the new shielded and unshielded Unloaded Patch Panel line during both the 2019 NAB Show, held in Las Vegas, Nev. from April 8-11 at the Las Vegas Convention Center, booth # C11447 and ISC West 2019, held in Las Vegas, Nev. from April 10-12 at the Sands Expo and Convention Center, booth #6035. The new 24- and 48-port line is now available.

“Platinum Tools is known as a leader in providing products and solutions for the structured wiring networking world of data, voice, and video,” said Lee Sachs, Platinum Tools, Inc. president and general manager. “Our Unloaded Patch Panels make media integration easy, flexible, and field-configurable by populating the ports as needed.”

The Unloaded Patch Panels make it easy to mix and match keystones, replace a damaged port, and add new runs. They also make category upgrades easy, maximize limited rack space, and are perfect for residential or small office applications.

Unloaded Patch Panel 24 Port (p/n 641-24U):

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- MSRP: \$25.25

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Unloaded Patch Panel 48 Port (p/n 644-48SU):

- Shielded
- 48 port, 2U, STP, 19 in.
- MSRP: \$57.85

Additional features include:

- For use with RJ45 Ethernet, HDMI audio/video, voice, USB, and other applications
- Ports are numbered for easy connection identification
- Write-on labels with protective covers
- Mounts into 1U/2U of EIA-standard 19 in. 2-post rack or wall-mount rack enclosure
- Support and management bar is removable and includes cable zip ties to secure cables

For additional pricing and more information on Platinum Tools and its complete product line, please visit www.platinumtools.com, call (800) 749-5783, or email info@platinumtools.com.

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Platinum Tools® Launches MapMaster™ mini RJ45 Pocket Cable Tester at 2019 NAB & ISC West Shows

Now Available, the MapMaster™ mini Pocket Cable Tester (p/n T109C) Maps Multiple Locations of RJ45 Network Cables and Detects Shorts, Opens, Miswires, Reversals, and Split-Pairs

Platinum Tools, the leader in solutions for the preparation, installation, hand termination and testing of wire and cable, is proud to announce the launch of the MapMaster™ mini Pocket cable tester (p/n T109C). Now available, the MapMaster™ mini has an MSRP of \$59.95 USD and will be featured during the 2019 NAB Show, held in Las Vegas, Nev. from April 8-11 at the Las Vegas Convention Center, booth # C11447, and ISC West 2019, held in Las Vegas, Nev. from April 10-12 at the Sands Expo and Convention Center, booth #6035.

“The MapMaster™ mini RJ45 cable tester maps multiple locations of RJ45 network cables and detects shorts, opens, miswires, reversals, and split-pairs,” explained George Jang, Platinum Tools, Inc. product manager. “A built-in tone generator with four different tone combinations can be used with a tone probe to detect where a cable is routed and the location of the end of the cable. Every installer should have this on hand for every installation, troubleshooting, and maintenance calls.”

The MapMaster™ mini determines wire condition, whether good or faulty, and displays it on its LCD display. A set of five mapping remotes is included for locating cables terminated in wall jacks or patch panels. The MapMaster™ mini also identifies the patch panel port where network cable is terminated and can find and fix the position of exposed or hidden cables.

Additional features include:

- Large LCD displays TIA/EIA568A/B wiremap sequence & easily identifies faults
- Identifies Network ID-Only Remotes Set #1-5
- Compatible with up to two test and map remotes
- Quickly identify unlabeled network cables

- Trace/locate network cables and locate breaks/opens in network cabling
- Single multi-function button operates test functions, tone generation, and ID-Only remotes location
- Self-storing remote
- Auto power off prevents depletion of battery power

For additional pricing and more information on Platinum Tools and its complete product line, please visit www.platinumtools.com, call (800) 749-5783, or email info@platinumtools.com.

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24-24W



11025 LED
7W

RGBW MR16 LAMP
4 Watt - 12V



11016-101
4W



11014-101
4W



REMOTE
(Not Separately)

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- Low Voltage / 12VDC
- 24VAC Adapter



110091-101-100
12W



110100-01 LED MR16
12W

RGBW A23 LAMP
12 Watt - 85-265V



110104-001-100
24-36 Watt - 120V



110104-001-001
24-36 Watt - 120V



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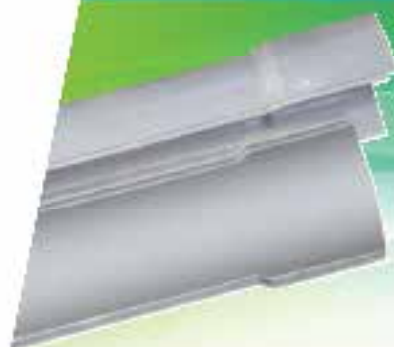
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