

THE BENEFITS OF INDEPENDENT TESTING

We have all heard it, the local TV news anchor reporting on a story and stating, “And the results from an independent testing laboratory are....” Most of us know someone or have experienced ourselves getting a “medical second opinion.” These actions are taken for one important reason--someone wants to be more confident in a product or service. As a society we place value on an independent review or opinion and the resulting confidence it will provide. Independent opinions and reports are always viewed as more credible because they are inherently objective and free from any conflict of interest.

Accordingly, independent testing services should be viewed the same way, as a benefit for businesses that enhances the value of a product. In many industry sectors independent testing services are in fact viewed that way. Whether it is the safety of a consumer electronic product, the quality of a food product or the strength of a construction building product, independent testing services provide a higher level of confidence and, therefore, value in the product.

Because of the higher confidence placed in independent testing laboratories, they are held to a higher level of accountability. Independence, alone, is never a substitute for technical competence. Because of this, most laboratories are accredited by either national or international laboratory accrediting bodies, providing an assurance of technical competence that goes well beyond the level to which a manufacturer’s in-house laboratory would be. It is only after performing extensive on-site audits and assessments that these independent accrediting bodies attest to the laboratory’s ability to perform the complicated and technical tests and services they offer.

Those tests and services are very broad in the scope, literally from A to Z, air to zinc, including such product groups as aircraft parts, crops, drugs, electrical appliances, military components, soils, steel and water. Independent

laboratories today provide vital and important services to a wide range of industries and sectors, ranging from governmental agencies and manufacturers to farmers and homeowners.

Clients turn to independent laboratories for many reasons: objectivity, convenience, liability protection, technical know-how, but, most importantly, the “value” they provide. They view this value as a benefit to their business. It sets them apart. It raises the perceived “quality” of their product. The reports and findings of independent laboratories provide the “acceptance” a manufacturer or distributor needs to sell his products. Those reports and findings can also be used as part of an effective “defense” of the product should a product liability issue arise. Access for products and services to the international marketplace is very important and independent laboratories maintain the listing, approvals, registrations and accreditations that are required to gain access to the markets a manufacturer seeks to enter.. Simply put, the results from a nationally or internationally accredited independent laboratory will be accepted, providing the “passport” needed to gain market access.

Properly used, independent laboratories are an extension of the modern day manufacturer. They provide technical know-how that the manufacturer does not have to internally develop. They provide objective review during the design stages of a product. Most importantly, they provide the data acceptance that will, in turn, provide market access for products and services.

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