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LAST TIME BUY = LEFT IT TOO LATE



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An authorised supplier can procure wafer and die inventory and complete the manufacturing process

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The only true way to ensure you are not spooked by last time buy notifications is to plan for obsolescence at design-in, explains director of marketing, Rochester Electronics, George Karalias

When an original semiconductor manufacturer discontinues a device, it can be difficult for customers to accurately forecast last-time buy requirements, absorb the additional inventory and storage costs, or find a drop-in replacement. OEMs can find themselves estimating up to 20 years out to support their production plans, while the average life span of the designed-in device has been reduced to four years or less.

The increased need for discontinued semiconductors has led to proliferation of grey market practices. Fraudulent manufacture, distribution and sales of fake semiconductors are a growing problem throughout the electronics industry.

Counterfeiting has a negative effect on reputable component manufacturers and distributors, causes purchasing dilemmas for component buyers, problems for equipment manufacturers and trouble for equipment operators. In mission-critical applications, there can be serious consequences resulting in loss of life.

There are only two fail-safe ways to counter this problem: buying directly from the original manufacturer; or enlisting the help of authorised distributors and manufacturers.

It is not enough to act when an end-of-life (EOL) or last-time-buy notification is made. OEMs, particularly those selling into industries with long lifecycles, should anticipate discontinued semiconductor announcements and plan ahead, perhaps as early as when a semiconductor is designed-in.

To ensure product quality, find an authorised supplier with a proven record of product authenticity and traceability to the original manufacturer. OEM buyers want assurance that the product they are buying has undergone proper storage and handling, is guaranteed

with long-term support and has consistent pricing.

For suppliers considering end-of-life options before EOL is announced, there are a number of solutions that can be put in place to ensure long-term availability. Options available through authorised suppliers include:



It may be possible to re-create obsolete devices with the authorised permission of the original manufacturer

Finished inventories: authorised, franchised distributors for finished devices received from the original manufacturer can provide discontinued parts immediately. A directory of authorised suppliers can be found at www.electronicasas.com



Products can be tested to military or space-level test flows

Wafer and die inventories: an authorised supplier will procure wafer and die-level inventory, test programs and test fixtures from the original manufacturer and complete the manufacturing process. The devices are tested to, or in excess of, the original manufacturer's specifications. Products can be tested to military- or space-level test flows.

Long term supply program: authorised source long-term supply and support for discontinued semiconductors offers extended product life for decades.

Customer-supplied die storage: Whether it is a single part number or many different parts, customer-supplied product can be stored in secure climate-controlled facilities, assuring handling, logistics and distribution of critical devices.

Bill-of-material services: customers provide BOMs to an authorised supplier to receive regular follow-up alerts on devices approaching EOL.

Device re-creation: It may be possible to re-create obsolete devices with the authorised permission of the original manufacturer. Licensing agreements enable a supplier to re-create an exact duplicate of the device, providing a continuous long-term supply of critical devices. Device re-creation is more reliable than emulation, which only mimics device function and can be prone to failure.

Planning ahead for EOL ensures there is no interruption in the supply chain and that manufacturing can continue with quality semiconductors from a reliable source. By planning ahead, OEMs can avoid grey market practices and purchase only from the original manufacturer, contractually licensed continuing supply manufacturers and OEM-authorised distributors that guarantee the device's quality, reliability and performance.

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