

All Lemons Started with a Seed

A brief history behind bad products

Back in the days of the Pony Express, word of mouth-or-quill traveled at the pace of a galloping horse (25-30 mph). If your personal correspondence traveled by stagecoach, it would take 40 hours to go to go 400 miles.

But things would get better.

*Developed in the 1830s and 1840s by Samuel Morse (1791-1872) and other inventors, the **telegraph** revolutionized long-distance communication. It worked by transmitting electrical signals over a wire laid between stations. In 1844, Morse sent his first telegraph message, from Washington, D.C., to Baltimore, Maryland; by 1866, a telegraph line had been laid across the Atlantic Ocean from the U.S. to Europe. Although the telegraph had fallen out of widespread use by the start of the 21st century, replaced by the telephone, fax machine and Internet, it laid the groundwork for the communications revolution that led to those later innovations.*

The point of this communication(s) tutorial is to illustrate how long it took for word-of-mouth to get from one place to another. Point being that if your **Remington 1 Typewriter** or **Singer Sewing Machine** didn't work right or you just couldn't figure how to use those newfangled inventions, chances are the next newest model is coming to market already. **You were stuck with what you had** and there were precious few people to complain to.

But things were made with greater skill and craftsmanship than things are now. But let's say for argument's sake, that old Remington #1's 2nd row of letters spelled SQUIRTY instead of QWERTY. Now that will mess with your **qwelleng** (sp.) and you would not be be happy with it.

Now you could complain to your neighbor, but they are over the hill and down the road...and God doesn't bother himself with such small problems.

*But things would get better, right before they got worse. The industrial revolutionary process of mass production is embraced, but there is a direct correlation between fast and mistakes. Even if that meant a decrease in quality, mankind will become acquainted with the **Lemon**. And as more and more people could complain to each other faster, word has now reached the manufacturer.*

Let's look at origin of the word **lemon** to describe a bad product.

The use of the word "lemon" to describe a highly flawed item predates its use in describing cars and can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century as a British and American slang

The first attribution of the phrase "lemon" to mean a problematic car was in a [Volkswagen](#) ad created by [Julian Koenig](#) & [Helmut Krone](#) as part of an ad campaign managed by William Bernbach, all advertising executives with the firm Doyle Dane Bernbach in 1960, which was a follow-up to their [Think Small](#) advertising campaign for VW.

Economist [George Akerlof](#) in his 1970 paper "[The Market for Lemons: Quality Uncertainty and the Market Mechanism](#)" identified the severe lemon problems that may afflict markets characterized by [asymmetrical information](#). A study of rejections of important economic papers noted that before Akerlof's paper was accepted, the first California lemon law was proposed in 1980.

In the Automotive Industry...

In general, the number of recalls has been increasing - with an exception during the [economic crisis 2009-2010](#) – due to time, cost and market pressure. Per year, global

automotive **warranties** are estimated as USD 40 billion, 3 -5 % loss in sales. Low priced production often leads to minor quality, and outsourcing leads to a shift of knowledge concerning techniques and processes. This way, technical failures are more likely to occur due to communication problems between the different parties engaged in the supply chain and missing definitions for technical interfaces. Since most of the failures are introduced within the production phase, an early failure analysis can prevent from high recall costs and image loss. Usually, it takes 12 months from failure detection to correction. An image loss is then bound to happen and will require new, costly marketing efforts to improve it. Despite the increasing number of recalls, a **Mojo Motors, Inc.** study found only .005 percent of customers ask about recalls when contacting dealerships.

There is no real Conclusion if you are driving a lemon.

Though these might be expensive recalls, they certainly aren't the last. Every day, government regulators and victimized consumers continue to uncover widespread oversights in auto-makers' manufacturing process, forcing the industry to undergo ever-more recalls and "Safety Management Campaigns." **So drive safely out there, because you never know which vehicle will be the next to be dubbed America's most dangerous lemon.**