

CENTENNIAL LIGHT

Have you ever heard that things were made better? Or that they lasted longer? Or that they had better quality? Many people believe this to be true and, in fact, some manufacturers design products to have a limited lifespan, or make them with the intention of becoming obsolete after a certain period of time. This is known as planned obsolescence. But does it really happen?



Let's see some examples. Think about light bulbs, it's not uncommon for them to burn out from time to time, even quite frequently. Incandescent bulbs have a lifespan of between 31 to 83 days. These bulbs were very common years ago, and although more modern bulbs, like LEDs, can last much longer. Did you know that there's an incandescent bulb that has been working for over a century? It's the Livermore bulb, manufactured as one of the first models of this type of bulb, and indeed, it still works to this day, located in a fire department in the United States. But light bulbs are not the only case.

There's also the famous case of a Russian engineer who recorded a video demonstrating that his printer, which he had been using for a while, had broken down on purpose. The printer had an internal copy counter so that, when the time came, it would stop working. The engineer "hacked" the printer to reset that counter, and thus was able to make it work again without any problems. Light bulbs, printers... so far we've seen that indeed, there are manufacturers who aim for their products to have a short lifespan in order to sell you more of them.

However, that's not the only strategy. Now think about mobile phones. In just twenty years, they have evolved from small phones that could only make calls to becoming mini-computers we carry in our pockets. Now think about the best phone you can imagine, with the best battery, the best camera, the best software. Perhaps now it seems like a real treasure, but in just a few months, an even better version will come out. But is it really a superior phone? Don't your phones become slower over time?

Many companies decide to stop updating these devices precisely for that reason. This way, the latest model of phone will seem much superior. And so, in a year or two, the idea that we need to buy a new phone will come back into our heads, when in reality, the ones we have stored in the drawer still work.



Texto y Comprensión lectora:
Miguel de la Rosa Zurera

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where is the century-old light?

2. How did the Russian engineer fix the printer?

3. What is the technique called for manufacturing things with the aim of them breaking?

4. Do you think this manufacturing technique is responsible?

