

Following the crowd

We've all seen this image:



It illustrates what can happen when you blindly follow the leader. Often, this type of thing happens to companies that copy the latest design or in some cases, an older design that should've been obsoleted long ago.

Recent case-in-point: Running shoes

The photo below shows some of my own shoes that were purchased over the years. Can you guess which one was the most and least expensive?



All except one shoe allowed my large toes to puncture a very flimsy mesh material. And yes, I do trim my toe nails every so often. If you have recently looked at running and walking shoes within the past 5 years, you would have seen many mesh-style shoes such as the first three.

Here's what you may not have guessed - the last shoe is not only the least expensive of the bunch, but it is also the oldest.

In terms of cost, the second shoe was the most expensive (\$75). Next was the first shoe, and then the third shoe. All of these three are made by well-known companies, whereas the last

shoe is not very popular.

When I was very young, the manufacturer of Keds/Pro Keds would give sneakers to members of the local Boy's Club, under the condition that they allow the manufacturer to examine and photograph the shoes periodically. That way, they could document the wear patterns of many sizes and ages of kids, most of who would wear the shoes every day. It was a brilliant idea for a shoe that was known for its durability.

Getting back to my shoe frustration issue, it is obvious that any wear testing that was implemented by the first three shoe manufacturers of shoes in the photo, did not include real feet.

Does your company ever "follow the crowd" or bypass extensive testing because getting the product out to market or a particular customer is more important than the longevity of the product?

Isn't it ironic that many of us do the same thing to ourselves by skipping sufficient rest/exercise and nutritious food, all in the name of time?