Quality control

Size does matter.

I'm an Amazon convert. Although I have been doing mail order and online ordering for years without reservation, I tended to be dubious about Amazon, keeping more to the eBay's of the world.

This may have had something to do with my investing leanings, where I just couldn't grasp the concept of a company that quarter after quarter lost huge sums of money, but continued to operate. It made no sense to my sensible mind.

Finally, I gave in. I started using the company. Eventually, I would not only buy a Prime membership, I would buy the stock. My current favorable opinion of the company is certainly improved by the amount of (on paper) money that investment has made for me.

On whole, I would say I've had a great experience with Amazon. Looking back, I would say I've had maybe three unsatisfactory purchases out of about 130 (110 reviewed!). Of those three, two were rectified/refunded.

The two-day shipping is a dream (one day, if it comes out of the Florida warehouse) and the price is almost always unbeatable.

But (what's the point of a blog post if you don't have a

but?), there are some grown pains showing. Yes, not "growing" but "grown".

Amazon is a mature company now and thus it's facing the problem every large, (over?) expanded company faces: it's too big to keep a watch on every thing it sells.

My current case is a sad story about a printer ink cartridge. I purchased the (yellow) ink just a month ago and there was well over 2/3 of the cartridge left. Yet my printer turned up its nose and my computer told me it could no longer "Recognize the cartridge".

Ugh. So, in a mini-respite of our week full of rain, I slipped out to Wal-Mart and bought a replacement. Of course, the printer worked fine thereafter.

A friend of mine suggested the problem might be in the "good by" date. Apparently, printer companies are dating their ink to "ensure highest quality". Of course, we can all read that as to "ensure you buy ink more often".

Obviously, the box for that ink cartridge is long since recycled, so I can't confirm that theory (although I did check my new ink, which said it was good until 2020). If it's true, it may mean that many retailers, online and brick and mortar, may have soon-to-be or currently expired ink.

And Amazon has tens of thousands of sellers. How can it possibly check to make sure they all stock and ship valid, "fresh" goods?

I don't know how they do it, but they absolutely need to figure out a way. Certainly customer refunds remove the cost pain, but the annoyance, aggravation or downright emergency invalid or out-of-date products may create is sure to start having an impact on customers' psyches.

For me, I still remain a big fan and continue to use them for

lots of stuff (even stupid stuff, like a USB cord), but it bears watching to see how becoming a behemoth has further impacts on Amazon's quality control.