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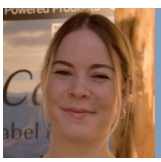
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LET'S GET THIS (TRADE) SHOW ON THE ROAD

I've done my fair share of trade shows during my time as editor of European Pharmaceutical Manufacturer, BP&R's sister publication, but recently I've come to appreciate the unique vibe of smaller-scale events.

Trade shows are manic - as anyone who's ever been to one can confirm – with back-to-back meetings, large distances between halls and giving your pedometer a run for its money.

But smaller, one-day events offer a more focused atmosphere for direct networking with industry peers and hands-on experiences. And that's exactly what I saw when I attended the Sumitomo (SHI) Demag Roadshow in July.

While I've been familiarised with automation and robotics advancing the pharmaceutical industry, I'm equally impressed to see similar advancements taking shape in plastics.

From AI sorting of food-based plastics to pick-and-place robots in injection moulding, manufacturing companies are able to offer real-time monitoring, improved lead times and seamless integration. These elements are becoming non-negotiable in our modern world where instant communication and accurate error predictions are required to maintain high productivity and efficiency.

And this is exactly what Sumitomo (SHI) Demag showcased; an all-electric IntElect injection moulding machine in its first-ever supersized roadshow truck, along with several new digital solutions designed to enhance processing transparency and machine availability.

On a personal note, the event was organised in such a way that felt valuable to attend – a point that Dave Raine explores further on page 36. The interactive sessions, driving simulations (and the unexpected bonus of winning a race around Silverstone Circuit) made the event feel more like a day out.

But don't get me wrong, because trade shows offer something that smaller events can't. Across vast halls and a plethora of industry experts, trade shows offer a unique blend of networking, innovation and education that smaller, more direct shows simply can't match.

> **"Trade shows offer a unique blend of networking, innovation and education that smaller, more direct shows simply can't match."**

These types of shows provide a comprehensive and dynamic snapshot of an entire industry, not just one corner of it. And this is expressed through keynote speeches, panel discussions, Q&As, workshops and product demonstrations, adding layers of value to the event. The scale of trade shows also enhances networking opportunities attracting thousands of attendees from different sectors.

As industries continue to evolve, the value of both these types of events remains significant. Both trade shows and their smaller counterparts are valuable in their own right, depending on the needs of the visitor, but both play a key role in maintaining interest, innovation and numbers in the plastics industry.

REBEKAH JORDAN
EDITOR



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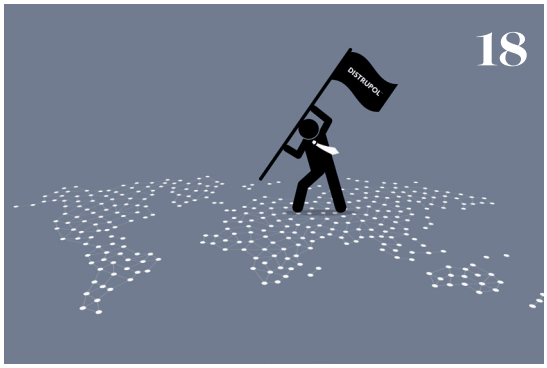




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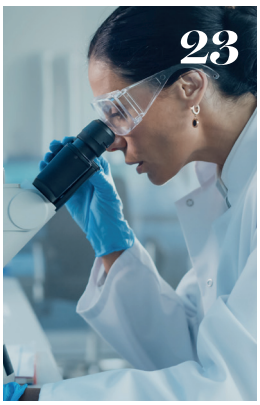
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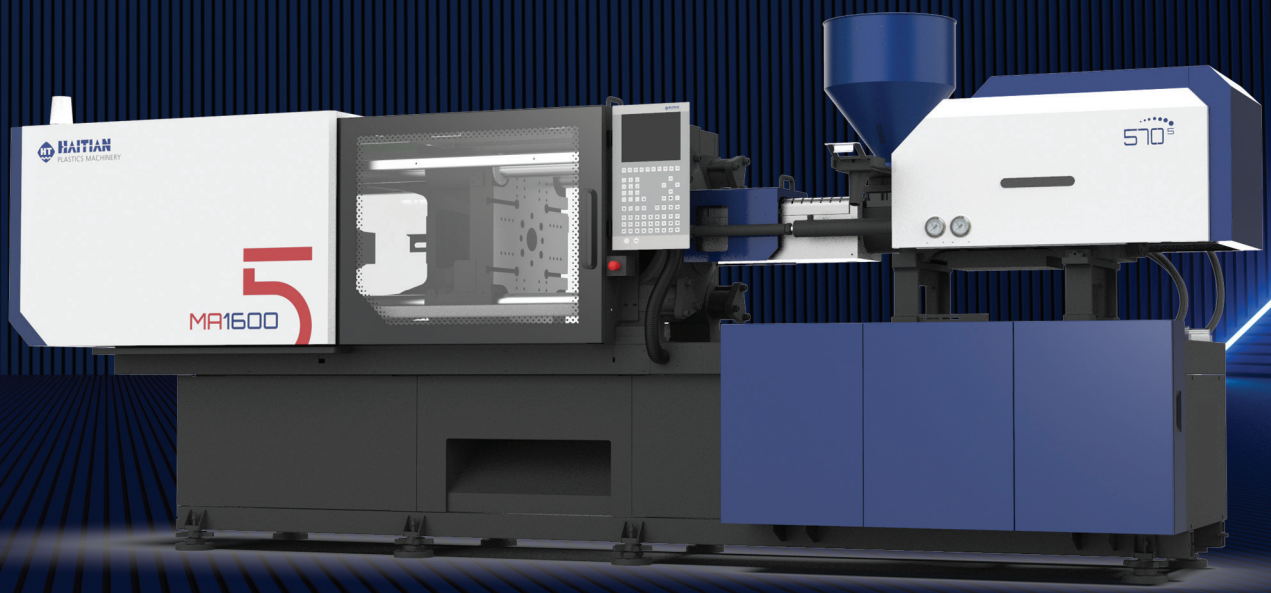




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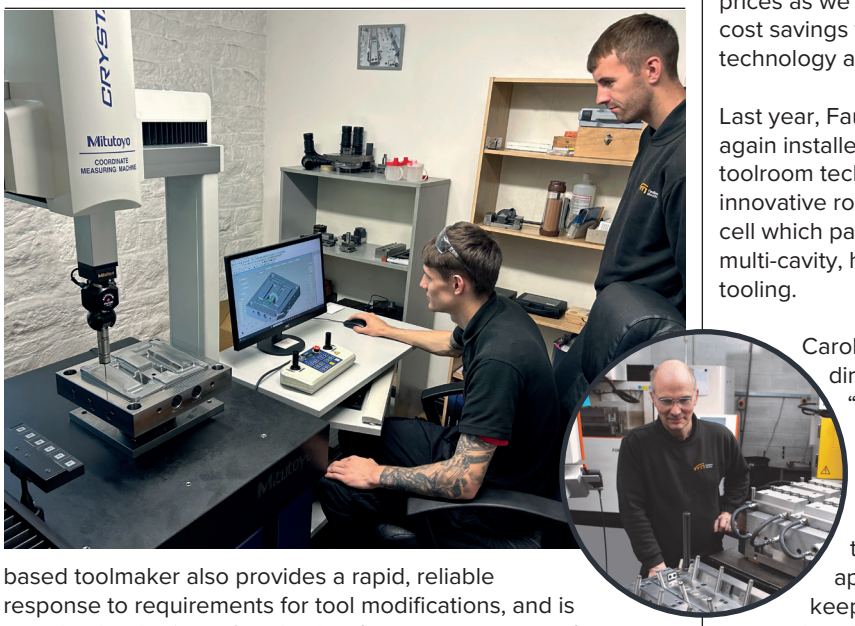
Faulkner Moulds achieves three decades of success

This year, Faulkner Moulds celebrates 30 years of UK toolmaking excellence.

The business was started in 1994 by managing director, Duncan Faulkner. While completing an apprenticeship in toolmaking and gaining experience, Duncan realised his great passion and aptitude for creating the highest quality mould tooling. And so, he pooled all his resources into buying a Bridgeport milling machine and a Boxford lathe for his garage, and Faulkner Moulds was born.

30 years on, Faulkner Moulds has established a solid reputation in the industry, developing toolmaking technology and techniques and winning UK 'Toolmaker of the Year' multiple times, as well as 2022 'Manufacturer of the Year'.

With a company motto of "Be Exemplary", Faulkner Moulds specialises in multi-cavity, high production tooling with fast cycle times, and complex tooling such as twin-shot, overmould and unscrewing mechanisms. The Yorkshire-based toolmaker also provides a rapid, reliable response to requirements for tool modifications, and is proud to be the 'go-to' toolmaker for many customers for repairs, modifications, servicing and inspection reports.



Over the years, Faulkner Moulds has continually invested in technology. As Duncan puts it: "At Faulkner Moulds, we never stand still. Our pioneering approach to technological investment and skills development means we are leaders in our field. We pass these benefits on to our customers in superb accuracy, and cost and time efficiencies. Indeed, many customers are pleasantly surprised at the competitiveness of our prices as we create these cost savings through our technology and techniques."

Last year, Faulkner Moulds again installed advanced toolroom technology, with an innovative robotic production cell which particularly supports multi-cavity, high-production tooling.

Caroline Faulkner, director, added: "Our team culture is of pride in our customer service and on our honest, transparent approach. We keep customers fully updated during each project, with customer direct access to the same senior project manager throughout. We also have an 'open door' policy so customers can view progress on their tool, and customers can fully rely on our service after tool delivery."

BPF leads call for urgent action from new Exchequer Secretary

The British Plastics Federation (BPF) has coordinated the submission of a joint letter to the newly appointed exchequer secretary, James Murray MP, calling for an urgent response to the previous government's mass balance consultation. The consultation closed in October 2023 and there has been no response to this nor any indication of whether the government is likely to accept mass balance as a method for calculating recycled content within the UK Plastic Packaging Tax (PPT).

The letter argues that key investment decisions are happening now and companies are choosing to invest outside of the UK, as there is no certainty mass balance will be permitted within the scope of the PPT. This uncertainty inhibits green growth opportunities and prevents the innovations that have been developed within the UK from being commercialised here. The UK has an opportunity to be a leader in chemical recycling, the letter claims, but only if companies have the confidence to invest.



Chemical recycling is a key part of the circular economy, as it enables a wider range of products to be recycled and for more recycled content to be used in contact-sensitive applications. The new Defra minister has announced the development of a Roadmap to Zero Waste. Chemical recycling will be needed to achieve this, along with wider investment in the UK's recycling infrastructure.

The letter has been signed by 14 organisations - many of which represent a large number of companies - including the BPF, Chemical Industries Association, Charted Institute of Waste Management, Packaging Federation, and Plastics Europe, to name a few.



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Glasgow student designers swept the board at Design Innovation in Plastics Awards

Back in July, editor Rebekah Jordan attended the Design Innovation in Plastics (DIP) Awards hosted at the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining (IOM3) in London and caught up with the six finalists.

This year's contestants were asked to design an off-grid product for independent living, aimed at leisure or household markets, and to be made primarily of plastics. The panel of industry judges was 'blown away' by the innovations and creativity but, it was the Glasgow School of Art that truly stole the show, with their students dominating the top three spots.

Claiming the winning spot was Isabel Payne with 'SafiCase,' a device for cleaning and sterilising reusable menstrual cups, using steam from minimal water.



Isabel Payne with SafiCase

"The menstrual cup replaces 10 years of disposable sanitary products, which is a huge cost-saving and much better environmentally," Isabel said. "But there's no way of cleaning it or sterilising it portably unless you use the current way with a stove or in a microwave which requires electricity and a lot of water."

The flexible case design utilises medical-grade silicone, whilst the housing is made from polypropylene, and the solar battery base from high-density polyethylene.

Isabel's top place earned her a £1,000 cash prize, a placement with a DIP sponsor, a year's membership with IOM3, and an invitation to the annual banquet of the Worshipful Company of Horners.

Commenting on her achievement, she remarked: "It means such a lot to have a platform for dealing with the issue of period poverty, which is rarely spoken about, despite affecting so many people worldwide and around 40% of women in the UK. I hope this design helps bring awareness for reusable options, and helps other people decide to invest time in designing more solutions, as there is very little innovation in this area."

Second place went to Jake Lee with a cold-water temperature sensor that alerts users when their body temperature drops to dangerous levels in the water. 'SkinTemp' is powered using the temperature difference between the user's skin and the cold water using what is known as the Peltier effect.

Being a surfer himself, Jake recognised the lack of safety devices for cold-water activities. "Going surfing with my friends in cold waters up in Scotland, I noticed they would be waiting a few hours for their bodies to warm up before driving home," Jake described. "The only products available allow people to track their internal temperatures, but they're also very expensive.



Jake Lee with SkinTemp

"This is a different use case where it's about safety and the user understanding their bodies in a different way."

In terms of design, Jake mentioned using different polymers for different parts: "The key part is fluorinated ethylene propylene (FEP) which is flexible enough that it can curve to fit the contours of the user's back." He won £750 and a placement with a DIP sponsor.

Taking third place was Jem Mitchell with a solar-powered sonic deterrent that protects trees from being overgrazed by animals such as deer. 'Sentree' uses foil sensing interfaces, which interpret and respond when an animal tries to eat its bark or leaves with "capacitive touch." When an animal touches the tree, it disrupts the tree's micro-electric field: "Sentree can pick this up with a microcontroller and through the foil sensing interfaces and then releases a sound to scare the deer off."

Jem explained that existing methods to protect plants like

BP&R's editorial advisory board



Richard Brown, Chair of Judges Design Innovation in Plastics Awards



Dr Sally Beken Knowledge Transfer Manager – Polymers Innovate UK KTN



Robin Kent Managing Director Tangram Technology



Dr Carmen Torres-Sanchez Reader in Multifunctional Materials Manufacturing Loughborough University



Jem Mitchell with Sentree

fencing and tree guards are non-specific and often disrupt wildlife: "This innovation is set to be a less invasive, sustainable method to protect wildlife."

Polypropylene was the primary plastic implemented in the design because of its diversity and accessibility. Jem continued: "I also used thermoplastic polyurethane which is a great elastic and durable plastic to ensure high quality over a long time." Jem wins £500 and a placement with a DIP sponsor.

Highly Commended awards

The judges also awarded three highly commended prizes, each receiving £250.

Gargi Agrawalla, Loughborough University, showcased 'Ear Boost+,' a compact healthcare case that tackles the challenge of cleaning and dehumidifying cochlear implants when there is no available electricity. Inspired by her own experience of cochlear implants, Gargi said: "My frustrations with the existing products inspired me to come up with this product. Cochlear implant communities are on the same page when it comes to experiencing travel limitations to remote areas where there is no electricity."

Like other sensitive electronics, she said the nightly care and maintenance of cochlear implants every night can be quite demanding. Her product, she added, made all this a lot easier for the user: "Ear Boost+ simultaneously dehumidifies cochlear implants and charges



Gargi Agrawalla with Ear Boost+

batteries."

Brandon Hopkins from London South Bank University created a free-drifting oceanographic data buoy collecting real-time data for pollution, weather and climate research.

After much research, Brandon identified limitations in existing buoys' reliance on solar panels and lithium-ion batteries and came up with the idea of using saltwater batteries instead. Consequently, Brandon introduced 'Saltbuoy,' which leverages the ocean's natural resources. He told BP&R: "I thought maybe we could utilise the fact that we've got the entire ocean at our fingertips. Why don't we just use the constant flow of that?"



Brandon Hopkins with Saltbuoy

Describing the plastics used, he said: "I used recyclable first-generation polyethylene because it's really good in water environments and it's used in other data buoys."

Joe Shade, De Montfort University, presented his 'Bijou Smart Hive' which uses solar power and sensors to create a beekeeping solution.

Using remote monitoring, users can track the bee's health and status in real-time as well as the conditions of the smart hive. He explained: "Bees tend to die in extreme weather conditions. If you can maintain homeostasis and keep it in a nice temperature window, the bees live longer. They produce more honey and they pollinate more crops, so it's better for the environment and better for the bees."

Joe told BP&R where his inspiration came from: "My dad has always wanted to keep bees and he's always talking about it. So when I saw the brief to design an off-grid sustainable product, it just sort of popped into my head."

Chairman of judges Richard Brown commented on the overall successful event: "All the finalists showed they have the skills to bring new, innovative and functional products to market. Creativity and invention are alive in our future designers, demonstrated in the many entries we received overall."

Design Innovation in Plastics is supported by the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining, The Worshipful Company of Horners and headline industry sponsor, Covestro.

Joe Shade with Bijou Smart Hive





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Haitian International's Open House 2024:
INNOVATION AND COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS



The UK Haitian / Premier Moulding Machinery team attended the traditional Haitian open house days with a delegate of UK customers. From 25 - 27 June, Haitian International Germany hosted its annual Open House, welcoming approximately 1,000 visitors over three days. Held at the European Headquarters in Ebermannsdorf, Bavaria, the event has become a major showcase for the entire product range and capabilities of the Haitian Group, attracting interest and customers from all over Europe. This year set a new record for visitor numbers, highlighting the growing interest and appeal of Haitian's industry solutions.

The 5th generation technology of injection moulding machines

This year's event was particularly special as Haitian introduced the now-established 5th generation of injection moulding machines. Servo-hydraulic and electric injection moulding machines, featuring numerous hardware and software upgrades. These upgrades include a new controller, intelligent machine functions, electrical charging for small and medium-sized servo-hydraulic machines, a new drive system for machine energy savings, and many more. All of these are general standards in Haitian and Zhafir machines.

The event featured a selection of the main machine series, highlighting Haitian International's commitment to innovation across a wide range of machine concepts. Exhibits during the Open House included:

- **Two-platen Jupiter V Series (10800 kN)**
  The JU10800V produced an automotive spoiler application using Aurora's PP EPDM TV15. The machine used direct gating with HRS-Oerlikon servo-driven hot runner system. The machine was equipped with Haitian magnetic platens for faster setups and a Sepro Success33 robot for part removal.

- **Electrical Zeres V Series (1200 kN) with Premium Medical Package**
  The electrical toggle machine with integrated hydraulics produced 8 cavity syringe barrels (1.5 ml) from Werkzeugbau Ruhla, made from PP9074MED from Exxon Mobil. Equipped with a laminar flow box, quality flap and conveyor belt from PetekReinraumtechnik, it showcased its flexibility for high-precision medical applications.

- **Electrical Zeres V Series (1500 kN):**
  Production of a fibre optic network splitter with a minimum wall thickness of 0.5 mm in PC/ABS. This high-precision application used a Hilectro robot, a Haitian temperature control unit and a Haitian dryer with a conveyor system, all supplied and manufactured by Haitian Smart Solutions.

- **Servo-hydraulic Mars SE Series (1600 kN)**
  The Special Edition of the popular servo-hydraulic toggle machine Mars Series comes as an even more economical version, featuring Haitian's new controller with many smart features as standard, exemplifying cost efficiency without compromising quality.

>



- **Servo-hydraulic Mars V Series (2000 kN)**
  The Mars Series has proven its reliability and efficiency with over 400,000 units sold worldwide. At the Open House, drinking cups with a special crinkle design made of PP, coloured using a Haitian colour mixer, were displayed. The mould from Gollmer Formen was equipped with cavity pressure sensors, monitored via Kistler's ComoNeo Box. The moulded parts were removed from the mould by a Hilectro robot and subsequently handled by the Hildegard system of Haitians' sales and service partner atr solutions in Germany.

Expanding horizons as a solution provider

Haitian International also highlighted products from other divisions within the Haitian Group, underscoring its evolution into a turnkey solution provider. The event featured CNC and die-casting machines and introduced the new Haitian Laser Machinery division.

"This year set a new record for visitor numbers, highlighting the growing interest and appeal of Haitian's industry solutions."



A significant highlight was the demonstration of peripherals from Haitian Smart Solutions, which is set to offer key peripherals for plastics processors. These peripherals include:

- Mould Temperature Control
- Dryers
- Hopper Dryers
- Colour Mixing Units
- Vacuum Loaders

All peripherals are seamlessly integrated into the control system, enabling users to operate them via the new Haitian machine controller. Parameters can be saved with the tool data, enhancing efficiency and ease of use.

Industry partners and keynotes

As in previous years, the event featured a total of 20 systems partners on-site, introducing efficient solutions for processors, from automation to financing. The daily keynotes provided attendees with valuable insights into current industry trends and developments, ranging from AI to sustainability and efficiency in today's productions.

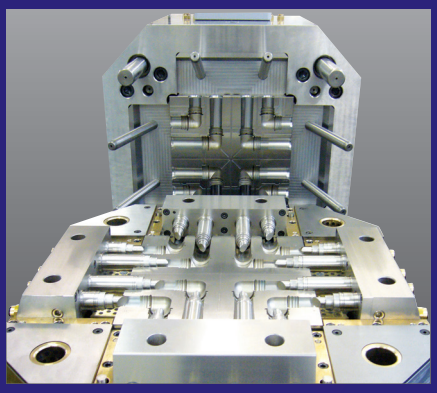
Outlook 2024

Haitian International's Open House 2024 was a great success, demonstrating Haitian's dedication to innovation, comprehensive solutions, and industry leadership. The company would like to thank all its visitors, partners, and team members for shaping the event.

The next event to experience Haitian's industry solutions will be during Fakuma 2024.

Celebrating 30 Years of Toolmaking Excellence

Faulkner Moulds

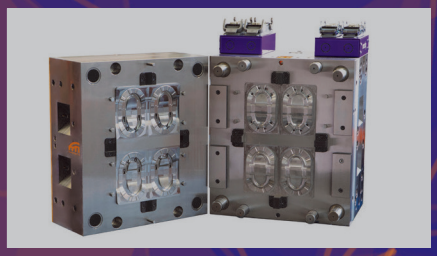


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BUILT-TO-SPEC:

Luxus offers customised recycled polymer compounds for all

BP&R spoke with ***Dane McWilliams,*** sales account manager at Luxus Limited, a UK-based manufacturer of recycled plastic compounds, covering the company's origins, industry diversification and latest developments in economic recycling and sustainability.

The story of Luxus Limited begins with a man named Ronald Tonn, a US Army veteran. After working for a US plastics company, he came to the UK in the 1950s to establish its European arm.

In 1965, Ron Tonn began Luxus as a trading company based in London, however soon found that to continue to trade polymer, he needed a means of recycling manufacturing waste.

Then, in 1967, Tonn acquired a disused factory in Louth, Lincolnshire, to support recycling for local manufacturers and producers in the North East. The location provided access to an east coast port for exporting to Scandinavia, Europe, and the USA. By 1976, increasing demand led to the purchase of land on the Fairfield Industrial Estate in Louth to build a dedicated recycling and compounding facility, marking the start of various long-standing relationships with suppliers of post-industrial and post-consumer material, recyclers, manufacturers of plastic products and the local community.

In 1982, phase one of the facility's development was completed, followed by the purchase of a separate recycling facility. This move separated recycling from compounding as the demand for more sophisticated compounds grew.

Luxus has been on the Fairfield Industrial Estate ever since and is looking forward to celebrating 60 years of trading in January. "We're not just a recycler, we're a technical compounder," McWilliams noted. Today, Luxus employs around 170 people, spanning a compounding facility, commercial centre, recycling centre, and a masterbatch manufacturer in South Wales (Colour Tone Masterbatch Ltd).

Branching out

Luxus supplied a diverse range of markets, including building and construction, household products, waste management, building materials, and logistics packaging to name just a few. Over two decades ago, Luxus expanded into the automotive industry, becoming a trusted supplier of recycled content compounds for major car manufacturers including colour-matched grades approved for use in 'A' surface interior applications. "Currently, there's a big push to comply with evolving End-of-Life vehicle regulation and the use of post-consumer automotive materials back into automotive applications," McWilliams explained. "We've been supplying post-consumer recycled material to the automotive industry for more than 20 years."

Sustainability is a cornerstone of the Luxus heritage and is always at the forefront of Luxus innovations. The "bin to bin" scheme collects bins from local councils and transforms them into new compounds for wheely bin production, reducing waste and providing high-impact strength recycled

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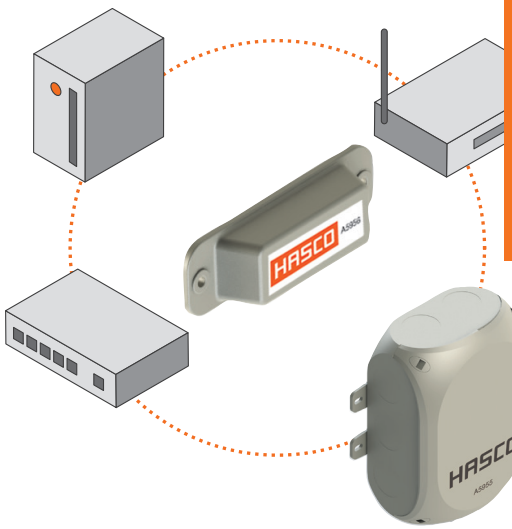
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Continued from page 14

material. Another example is within transportation: "We recycle end-of-life transportation crates or totes from a range of clients from supermarkets to the post office," McWilliams said. "We re-grind, test, formulate, and enhance them to create a polymer compound for reuse in the same application without changing the moulding machine parameters."

Quality and customer satisfaction

Luxus offers some standard grades but prides itself on custom, made-to-order recycled polymer compounds. "Whilst we do produce a range of stock grade, our USP is tailoring compounds to meet our clients' exacting specifications on a repeatable basis," McWilliams explained. This flexibility helps Luxus adapt to market demands. "We work with clients from the design stage to engineer solutions with a focus on true sustainability without compromise to product performance.
We formulate products with repeatability in mind and at least three alternative feedstock options to manage supply risks. Transparency with clients is key; if material supply is limited, we discuss options to achieve the desired outcome."

Beyond compounding, Luxus also specialises in material property enhancement. "Clients often want to move away from prime polymers to recycled compounds. We identify key properties, create sustainable formulations, and consistently produce material to the approved specifications. If on the rare occasion, a fully recycled compound cannot meet the brief, we can still offer lower CO2 alternatives than pure prime. For instance, some compounds supplied to meet automotive specifications may contain prime polymer with 30% to 60% PCR. We're also developing each automotive grade to include a percentage of ELV to meet upcoming European demands," McWilliams added.





"We formulate products with repeatability in mind and at least three alternative feedstock options to manage supply risks."

To optimise quality control, the team follows a rigorous multi-step procedure. First, all incoming feedstock is tested, evaluated and characterised; and non-compliant material will be rejected at this stage. Stage 2 is an AI-assisted predictive formulation, followed by small-scale blends created and tested in the lab to ensure they meet the agreed specifications. "The created formulation is then issued to the production team to reproduce the formulation in large-scale batches. The production team then continually sample manufactured product to the laboratory throughout the production run, to ensure the product continues to meet specification," said McWilliams.

Luxus maintains ongoing monitoring throughout the entire process from start to finish to ensure the product delivered to our customer is of the agreed standard.

Driving sustainability and performance

Luxus shared details of several recent projects, centred around their ethos of Art, Science and Innovation and with sustainability, product and manufacturing performance improvement at their core.

One in-house development was a three-year project completed last year to discover a more effective UV stabiliser for polymer compounds, mainly used in construction such as roofing products. Through extensive testing and trialling with different combinations of additives, Luxus scientists formulated an "enhanced UV package" that significantly improves UV stability, weather resistance and colour fade.

Using its proprietary UV and weather accelerator, Luxus simulated weather testing. After 11,000 hours, the enhanced package showed a remarkably lower Delta E value (a measure of colour change), compared to the other packages. Not only that, but having had commercial considerations in mind throughout development, the additional added cost of achieving this in comparison to the performance improvement is relatively small. So, technically and commercially it ticked all the boxes, reported McWilliams.

Meanwhile, Project Micro Dry was a two-and-a-half-year collaborative project funded by the Department for Energy, Sustainability and Net Zero. The result was an end-to-end energy reduction system that enables economic recycling of low-grade PCR polymer. Between 2021 and 2023, the project resulted in a 7% energy reduction with most recent results showing additional incremental savings.

Finally, Project Odour Control is currently underway. Also, a collaborative part-funded project, Luxus is reducing volatile organic compounds (VOCs) within polymer compounds by utilising novel technologies to remove odour pre-, post- and during production. The project's completion date is expected in January and is set to tie in nicely with the company's 60th anniversary.

ON THE COVER

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN PLASTICS MARKET: DISTRUPOL HAS ARRIVED

In an industry where change hasn't come about lightly in recent years, we're seeing power moves from main players in a bid to establish a competitive edge, thought leadership status and unrivalled service for customers. Distrupol, having celebrated 60 years in business in 2023, has kicked off 2024 with a bang, announcing multiple growth strategies to better service the European marketplace.

European expansion

The Distrupol team is renowned for its tenacity for success and drive to deliver the absolute best for customers and supply partners. 2024 has seen an explosion of activity and success from Distrupol, with the announcement of a European expansion, recruitment drive, and supplier/portfolio expansion. Having been absent from the European market for some 15 years, Distrupol felt now was the time to reestablish themselves as a European leader, opening branches in Spain, Italy, France, and Germany, joining already well-established businesses in the Nordics, Benelux, Egypt and USA. With a fresh, new team of sales and development engineers across the new sites, it's a very exciting time to be part of the Distrupol group.

Leading the expansion, commercial director, James Stanton, has made it clear that whilst the expansion has been a main drive of the business over the last 18 months, it's only intended to strengthen the business' ability to deliver in the UK. "Expanding across Europe gives us product, supplier, and project development access and knowledge which even further equips our UK team to service customers. The expansive portfolio, technical expertise, logistical excellence, first-class service and absolute quality that pre-2024 regions experienced as Distrupol customers will now be available to designers, manufacturers, producers and OEMs in the likes of France, Italy, Iberia, DACH, CEE, the Middle East, North Africa, and beyond. We're already seeing the positive impact of the wider geographic influence and are very excited to see how this develops."

With new suppliers being onboarded in a continuous process across Europe, and paying specific attention to emerging trends and markets, the Distrupol portfolio has never been stronger, and OEMs and manufacturers across all European regions are benefiting.

European technical development

As part of the expansion across Europe, Distrupol has implemented a central European development team, which comprises strategically located technical development engineers who provide unrivalled technical support to our customers. The central nature of this defined team enables increased knowledge sharing, which will mean that the UK market, for example, can benefit from developments and innovations taking place in the likes of Spain, France, Italy and Germany.



"With newly recruited sales representatives across EMEA, and central technical and customer service support available, we are well equipped and well prepared to take our industry-leading polymer expertise into new territories," said James Stanton, commercial & operations director at Distrupol.

Although there are many new faces, Distrupol still maintains its family business feel, and team spirit is at an all-time high.

Sustainability always in mind

Despite huge developments across the business, Distrupol's priority is sustainability. The team is working tirelessly to achieve net zero by 2050, and in recent months, the group has been thrilled to achieve ISCC PLUS certification for the UK, Finland, Sweden and Demark, with other sites currently in progress. In addition to this, Distrupol's silver EcoVadis rating has been an incredible achievement, with its overall sustainability score being in the top 6% of companies rated by EcoVadis (in the wholesale of waste, chemicals, fertilisers and agrochemical products, and other products n.e.c. industry).

"We take heed and direction from both government policies and industry initiatives and keep updated with sustainability trends to maximise our sustainability efforts," Orme stated.

With long-standing relationships with world-leading polymer producers, such as Celanese, Delrin, ChiMei, Ineos and Versalis to name just a few, Distrupol's access to the latest sustainable materials sets them up for delivering the latest innovations to customers. Whether that's PCR ABS, biobased POM, or recycled PP, product designers and manufacturers can rest assured that sustainability targets will be met with Distrupol.

Quick facts

- Distrupol serves over 1,850 customers in over 40 countries.
- The company offers a portfolio of over 4,000 grades of high-quality polymers, including sustainably-derived solutions.
- Distrupol is a founding member of the British Plastics Federation.
- The company was founded in 1963 and celebrated 60 years in 2023.
- Distrupol currently has warehouses in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Finland, and the Netherlands, enabling next-day delivery across Europe.



Furthermore, Distrupol has made significant investments to drive its sustainability mission and minimise its environmental footprint. This includes investing in communications and technology to reduce the need for travel, to investing in smart warehousing and sustainable product development.

New leadership

Distrupol's owners, GPD Companies Inc., recently appointed a new CEO, Kurt Scheuring, who brings an incredible wealth of experience and knowledge to the role. Scheuring is well known in the sector, having held multiple leadership roles in powerhouse companies such as GE Plastics and Polyone over the last 30+ years, and is primed and ready to lead Distrupol and other GPD Companies Inc. businesses to fresh success.

Commenting on his appointment, Schuering said: "I am excited to lead GPD and build upon the strong foundation established by Paul and the team. I look forward to working closely with our employees, suppliers, and customers to drive sustainable value and deliver exceptional results."

Paul Tayler will retire from his role as president and CEO and remain on GPD's Board of Directors.

Partnerships

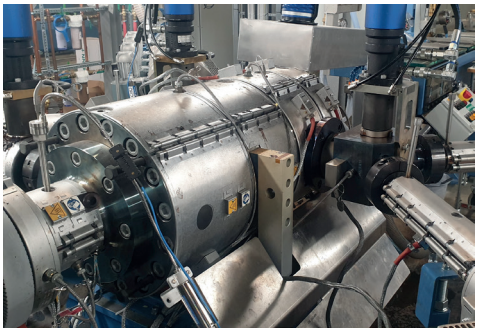
Expanding reach into other markets is made possible with strategic alliances. Last month, Distrupol announced its newly formed partnership with Polychim industrie SAS to deliver its homopolymer polypropylene portfolio across EMEA.

Commercial director, James Stanton, commented: "This addition to our pan-EMEA portfolio delivers high-quality materials to manufacturers in the consumer, automotive, packaging, and industrial sectors to name just a few. The Distrupol sales and technical teams are well-versed on the properties, advantages and applications of homopolymer polypropylene, and so we're excited to dive into the market.

"Polychim Industrie is a fantastic supply partner who we're really looking forward to working with in the future."

The feet at Distrupol have barely touched the ground since the start of the year, and that does not seem to be set to change as it progresses through H2 of 2024 and looks forward to 2025 and beyond.

The Rise of Microduct Pipes in Fibre Optic Infrastructure



With the increasing demand for high-speed internet, comes the need for robust and efficient infrastructure to support it - which is where microduct pipes come in.

Microduct pipes are small, flexible conduits designed to house optical fibres within telecommunications infrastructure. They protect the fibres from environmental factors whilst being easy to install and maintain. Additionally, their compact size and flexibility make them ideal for several applications in both urban and rural areas.

Tecnomatic, a specialist in extrusion technology, has developed advanced production lines specifically designed for microduct pipes. By optimising geometries and precise line adjustments, Tecnomatic launched its proprietary die-head technology. Consequently, the innovation offers higher production speeds, achieving up to 400 metres per minute for diameters of 7/3.5 and up to 200 metres per minute for diameters of 14/10.

A noteworthy achievement of Tecnomatic's die-head is its ability to maintain impressive sizing results at such high speeds. With minimal tolerance and ovality, the microduct pipes produced are of the highest quality, meeting the stringent standards of the telecommunications industry.

Moreover, Tecnomatic's die-head is engineered for efficiency and flexibility, allowing for fast skin and colour changes with the adoption of special valves and multiple extruders. This feature not only enhances productivity but also accommodates the diverse needs of their customers.

By promoting faster and more efficient manufacturing processes, it paves the way for the wider expansion of fibre optic networks worldwide. This will ultimately translate to improved connectivity, economic growth and quality of life for millions of people around the globe.



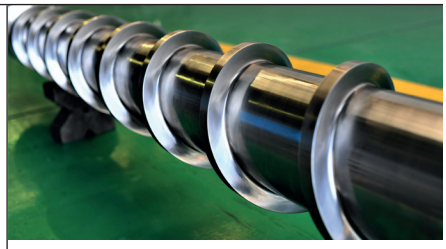
REDUCING WEAR FOR PROCESSING AGGRESSIVE MATERIALS

Working in partnership with European and UK manufacturers allows for enhanced solutions to include splines, co-rotational shafts, mixer elements and sectional barrels. Hertfordshire-based Magog Industries offers its latest range in coatings and materials, designed to further enhance longer life and greater resistance in demanding processing where increased proportions of glass-reinforced and recycled material are used.

"We constantly strive to offer solutions from optimal design to reduce wear to offering a wide range of surface technologies," explained Michael Bate, general manager. "We design everything in-house but also work closely with specialist partners to meet our customers' specific processing and production requirements. Our three core competencies run through everything we do: process experience, manufacturing expertise and engineering excellence."

Enhanced coatings specifications include: Thin Dense Chrome (TDC) to enhance wear with low friction and is FDA-approved for food process environments and Ceramic Seal coatings to reduce porosity and increase plating/coating life four to 10 times longer in corrosive environments.

In addition, HVOF (High Velocity Oxygen Fuel) that is thermally sprayed provides a crack-free 98% density with a hardness of 62 to 72 HRC. This scratch-resistant tungsten carbide coating has gained much interest among plastic moulders. Magog also offers screws and barrels for processing more aggressive

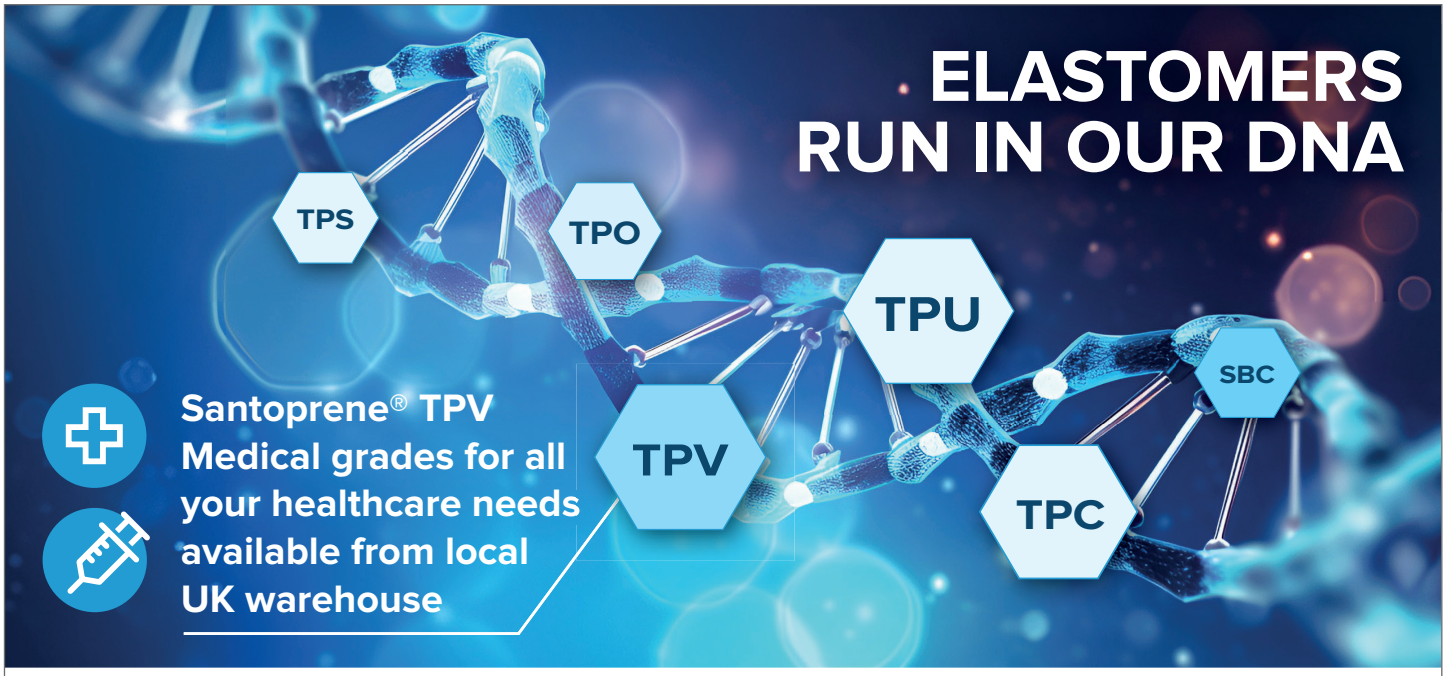


material from hardened D2 tool-steel to high-performance alloys such as Hastelloy (nickel-molybdenum) and Incoloy (nickel-iron-chromium).

All standard screws and barrels are manufactured in high-grade tool-steel. Further enhanced specifications for barrels include Hot Isostatic Pressing (HIP) to reduce porosity and increase the density of the barrel surface. It can be used as an alternative to Hastelloy or Incoloy when processing, for example using PTFE or Fluoropolymer material.

Magog also specialises in the refurbishment of pre-used parts which extends the life of screws and barrels by re-honing and partial re-line of barrel bores and hard welded re-build of screw flights in the bi-metallic alloy as standard.

Recent projects have increasingly turned to effective processing of bio-degradable plastics and increased wear resistance to process aggressive additives from recycled material, as Michael added: "We've been focussing on looking at measures, particularly surface treatment for abrasion and potential corrosion to increase resilience and longevity, specifically in ceramic and chrome seal coatings for demanding applications such as blown film extrusion."



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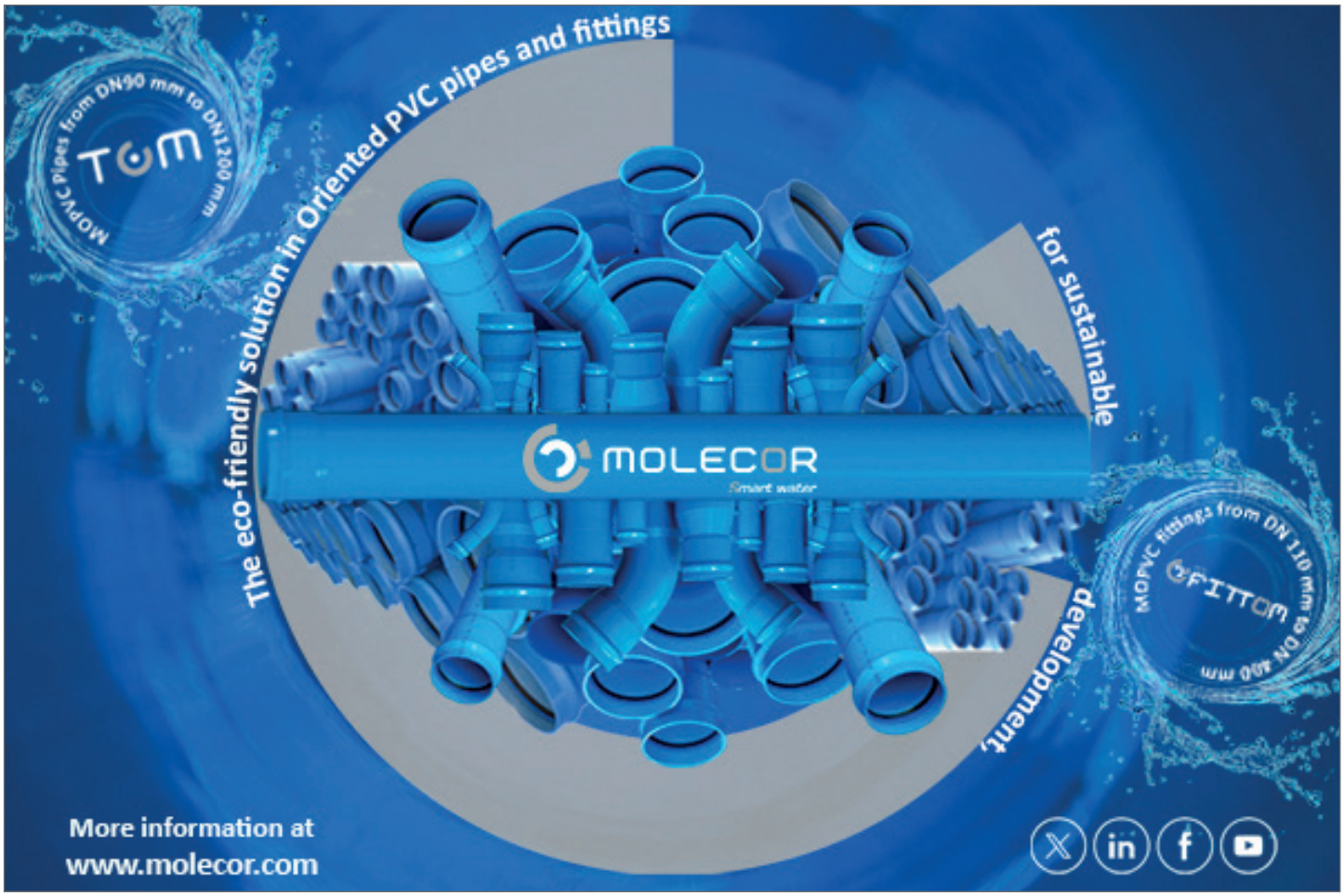
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Q&A

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How do your apprenticeships prepare individuals for careers in the broader polymer industry?

As part of the development of the new Polymer Processing Technician apprenticeship, apprentices gain a wider and deeper understanding of materials, processes, test methods and problem-solving - as well as some knowledge of the history of the polymer industry. This stretches beyond their current roles into the wider industry and will be an asset wherever they work in the future.

Our apprenticeships provide a platform for both new and existing employees to gain and improve their knowledge of the polymer industry both within and outside of their job roles.

Do you have any partnerships with polymer industry associations or companies to provide real-world experience for your apprentices?

Collectively, our Polymer Processing team has over 70 years of experience in the polymer industry, working with companies of all sizes, covering all polymers and all processing techniques. Amongst many, our Polymer Processing team has established connections with the BPF, IOM3, Smithers Rapra and The Manchester Polymer Group. As part of any apprenticeship, there is a requirement to be employed, therefore all of our polymer processing technicians are employed within the polymer industry.

How do you tailor your polymer processing apprenticeship programme to the needs of different companies within the plastics industry?

While the apprenticeship standard provides the framework for the syllabus, we recognise our cohorts of learners have a mixed background within the industry they work in. To ensure the programme is fit for purpose, all employers receive an on-site visit with our coaches to support them in designing training that fits around their business. Our coaches also provide all technical training onsite, removing the need for block release and ensuring that training is delivered on equipment relevant to each apprentice and not generalised.

How do your programmes address current challenges and opportunities in the polymer industry?

We designed the programme to support the industry to upskill as well as recruit into their technical workforce due to the large numbers of experienced staff retiring from the industry. Knowledge transfer in those circumstances can be a massive challenge, but the opportunity to fill the expertise gap with new, enthusiastic people or to develop those in operator roles to progress in their role is exactly what we have designed our curriculum around. Apprentices will not only focus on one particular skill set, instead, they will acquire a holistic skill set in all areas of the technical business by the end of the programme. Therefore, they can become much more integrated into the business and its needs going forwards.

In your experience, how do polymer processing apprenticeships benefit companies in the science and technology industries?

Our core objective for all employers and apprentices is supporting the professional development journey to increase both retention as well as the opportunity to bring a new audience into the polymer job market. Particularly for those organisations who do not have a formal training programme for their staff or would like to invest in training their staff in a more formal approach.

We hope for our apprentices to become future leaders in the industry and by giving them a wider and deeper understanding of the related science and technologies, they will be quicker to identify and solve problems. They will also have a higher awareness of health and safety and environmental issues that will overall contribute to the company's performance in the long term.



MAGOG

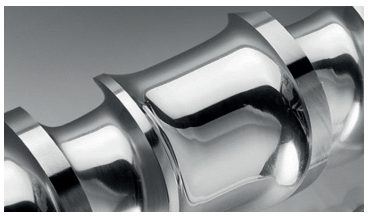
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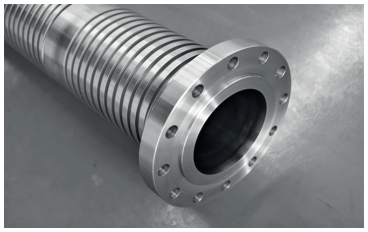
Screws, Barrels and Precision Components for the Plastics and Rubber Industry

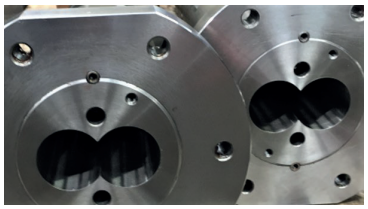
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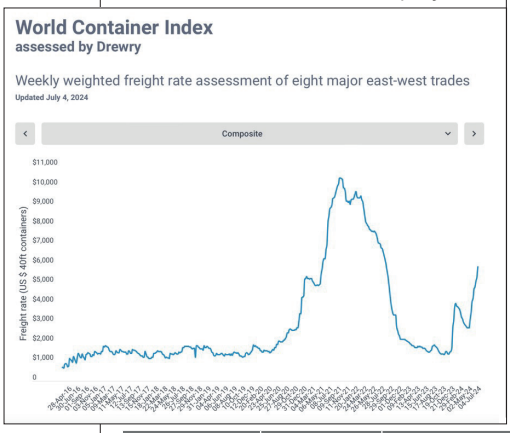
@POLYMERMAN ON PRICES

Polyolefin price inflation pressures continue to mount

With the exception of demand, the economics of polyolefin supply in the UK and Europe are likely to result in price increases in the second half of 2024.

So far this year weak demand for polyethylene and polypropylene has played into the hands of polyolefin converters with fierce competition across producer, trader and distribution sales channels to secure available volumes. However, this all looks set to change for the following reasons:

1. Logistics costs
As illustrated below, the Drewry World Container Index weekly weighted freight rate assessment of eight major east-west trades is again increasing quickly and the table below illustrates the cost premium per tonne based on the shipping cost for a 40-foot container increasing from $2,000 to $6,000, which, for lower value items such as polymer raw materials, is fast becoming prohibitive for shipping product from Asia to the UK and Europe.



2. High liquid feedstock costs
A significant proportion of polyolefin production in Asia and Europe is based upon Naphtha feedstock. Not only is Naphtha significantly more expensive than gas feedstocks such as ethane from shale gas and propane, but Naphtha prices track crude oil prices which remain firm and are, at the time of writing, trending towards an increase. In the case of PP from countries such as South Korea, this inflationary pressure comes in addition to the increased logistics costs outlined above.

3. Increasing gas prices
Whilst ethane gas in the Middle East and ethane derived from Shale Gas in the US are amongst the lowest-cost feedstocks in the world, prices in the US have risen by 40% since the beginning of 2024. This, combined with robust domestic US demand for PE, has pushed up prices to the level that it is not economically viable to match current UK price levels. Since the US is now a significant source of LLDPE and HDPE for UK converters, this situation in and of itself is likely to tighten supply and move the market fundamentals more in favour of the sellers.

4. Low levels of inventory
Uncertainty breeds caution and resellers and converters alike have low inventory levels, which is also in part a consequence of high interest rates. The reaction to any increase in demand, given limited inventory throughout the supply chain, is likely to have a significant impact on pricing, and in July, it was already becoming evident that converters were seeking to increase stocks in anticipation of increasing prices.

5. Underlying demand
Whilst converters continue to report weak downstream demand, it may be necessary to consider this in the context of exceptional demand during the COVID-19 pandemic and consequential capacity additions at many converters. More generally, there is a view that the underlying demand for packaging materials is improving as the post-pandemic supply chain destocking finally comes to an end.

Whilst prices are not likely to increase dramatically, for all the reasons outlined above, it is likely that there will be some polyolefin price inflation in the coming months.

USD/40'		$2,000.00	$6,000.00	Increase
GDP/40'		£1,600.00	£4,700.00	
Tonnes	18	£88.89	£261.11	£170.00
	22.5	£71.11	£208.89	£140.00
	24.57	£65.12	£191.29	£130.00
	25.5	£62.75	£184.31	£120.00
Multiple		1	2.9375	



Who is 'Polymerman'?
Mike Boswell is Managing Director of UK materials distributor, Plastribution, as well as the Chairman of the British Plastic Federation's Polymer Compounders and Distributors Group and its 'BREXIT Committee'. 'Polymerman' is the title used for announcements made via his Twitter account. This column is compiled using data from PIE (Plastics Information Europe) www.plastribution.co.uk | www.pieweb.com

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From blueprint to rubber:
THE PROCESS OF EXTRUSION DIES

Seals Direct, a British rubber extrusion manufacturer, discusses the steps to designing and manufacturing extrusion dies for rubber profiles.

The design and manufacture of an extrusion die is the initial step in extruding a rubber profile. The extrusion process involves pushing rubber compounds through a tool, also known as a die, to create a product that meets specific shape and dimensional requirements. This initial design phase is important in setting the blueprint for what will ultimately be produced during production of the rubber section. The development of an extrusion die is a complex challenge that involves considering multiple factors such as the physical characteristics of rubber, the complexity of the profile and environmental conditions under which the product will operate.

Each stage in the manufacturing process is important as any imperfections could lead to significant discrepancies in the final rubber products' quality, tolerance or performance.

Extrusion die design

The design process for an extrusion die begins with a detailed understanding of the required rubber section. It is important to gather precise measurements, desired shapes and specific application requirements to ensure that the die is tailored to produce the exact characteristics needed for functionality. In instances where there is an existing section, this process is usually completed by studying and taking measurements from the existing profile. Computer-aided design (CAD) software plays an important role at this stage, allowing toolmakers to create a detailed 3D model of the section to be extruded.

These models can then be used for visualising the flow of rubber through the die and predicting potential stress points or areas where defects may occur. This step is useful to ensure that the rubber flows evenly without any turbulence that could lead to defects in the final product, such as inconsistent thickness or surface blemishes. The simulation software can model the flow of rubber and allow the toolmaker to optimise the internal channels of the die and adjust the design to eliminate potential issues. This might involve tweaking the angles at which the rubber enters and exits the die or altering the tool's internal contours to promote a smoother flow.

Some profiles, such as rubber edge trims which comprise more than one type of rubber, require the development of multiple extrusion tools. This allows each rubber compound to be fed through a separate die, later being joined into one complete profile.

Manufacturing the extrusion die

The actual manufacturing of the extrusion die begins once the design has been finalised. This stage uses precision machining, where high-tech equipment such as CNC (Computer Numerical Control) machines are used to precisely carve a hole in the centre of a metal plate based on the specifications provided by the CAD models. CNC machining is preferred because of its ability to produce extremely accurate and consistent cuts, which are important for maintaining the integrity of the die's complex geometries. The precision of these machines ensures that the die's internal channels are smooth and conform exactly to the design, so that the rubber compound can correctly flow through the die.

After the basic shape of the die has been machined, the tool goes through a surface finishing process that is designed to enhance the die's functionality and longevity. Techniques such as grinding and polishing are used to achieve a mirror-like surface finish and reduce friction or wear during the extrusion process. Additionally,

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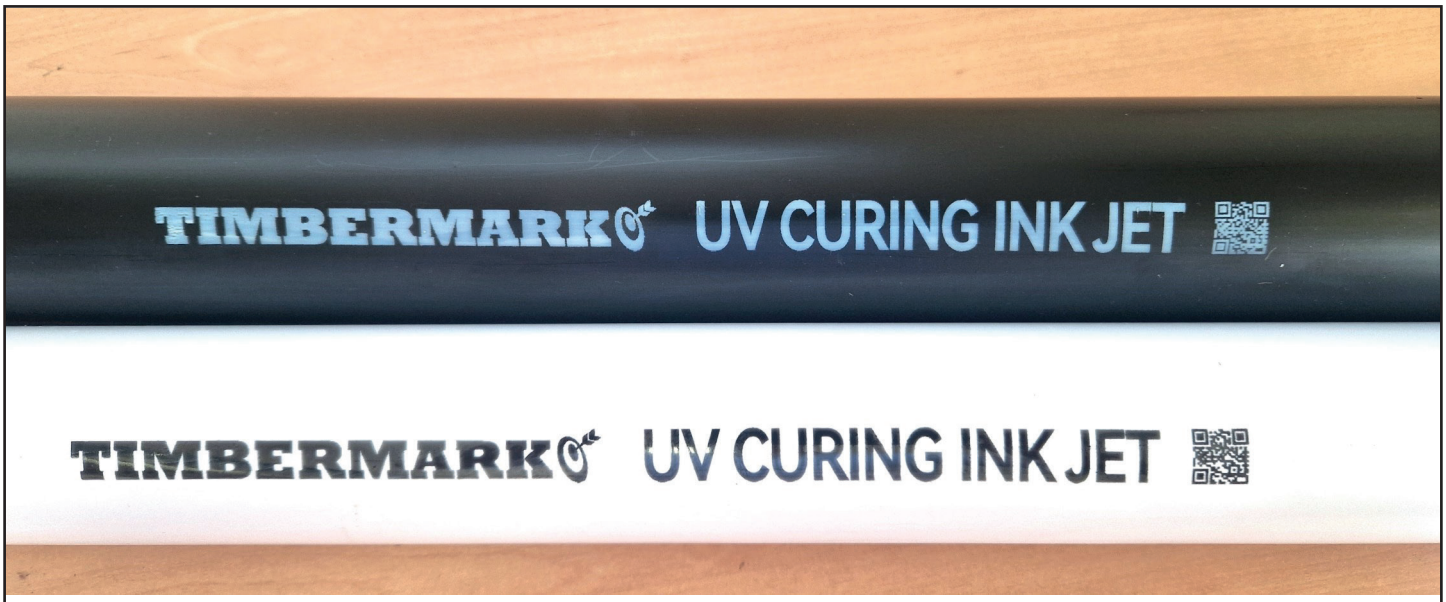
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surface treatments such as hardening or the application of wear-resistant coatings may be applied. These treatments help to protect the die against the corrosive effects of the rubber compounds and the mechanical stress from continuous operation.

Heat treatment may be applied to some dies, particularly those made from tool steel. The tool is heated to high temperatures and then cooled under controlled conditions to change its microstructure. This process increases the hardness and toughness of the steel so that it is more durable and resistant to the stresses of extrusion. The specific heat treatment process used (such as, quenching and tempering) depends on the type of steel and the requirements of the extrusion process. Properly heat-treated dies ensure consistent performance over longer operational periods, even under harsh manufacturing conditions.

"Each stage in the manufacturing process is important as any imperfections could lead to significant discrepancies in the final rubber products' quality, tolerance or performance."

In cases where the die consists of multiple components, the final step involves the careful assembly of these parts. This includes tools for profiles, such as rubber P seals, where a bridge is required to create a central hole. During assembly, alignment is important to ensure that all components fit together perfectly without any misalignments that could affect the extrusion process. Once assembled, the die may undergo further fine-tuning. This might involve slight adjustments to align the die properly with the extrusion machinery or additional polishing to enhance the surface quality. Only after these final adjustments can the die be considered ready for integration into the rubber extrusion line.

Quality control and testing

Once the die has been cut and fully treated, it needs to undergo a series of inspections and tests to make sure that it meets all design and functional specifications. Dimensional accuracy is confirmed using precision measuring instruments to verify that the die's dimensions match the CAD design specifications within the allowable tolerances. This will also help detect any potential defects that could impact the quality of the extruded rubber profiles.

Once a die passes the initial quality checks, it enters the prototype testing phase. This involves running the die in actual production conditions to produce sample rubber profiles. These prototypes are then measured against the product specifications for dimensions, physical properties and overall appearance. This real-world test is a good assessment for determining how the die interacts with the rubber compound and the extrusion equipment. It allows engineers to observe any potential issues with the rubber flow, die alignment or temperature settings that could affect the quality of the final product.

Quality control is an ongoing process that extends beyond pre-production testing. Once the die is operational, continuous monitoring is implemented to ensure it maintains high performance and product quality. This includes regular inspections and periodic testing of the profiles produced. Data collected from these activities help in forming a feedback loop that informs potential improvements not only in die manufacturing but also in maintenance practices. This iterative process ensures that the die can consistently produce high-quality rubber profiles and adapt to any changes in production requirements or material properties.

This extensive approach to quality control and testing ensures that each extrusion die not only performs to expectations but also contributes to the efficiency and reliability of the rubber extrusion process. By implementing thorough testing and stringent quality measures, manufacturers can significantly reduce the risk of defects, enhance product consistency and uphold the highest standards of production.

THE TRUE COLOURS OF GLAZPART

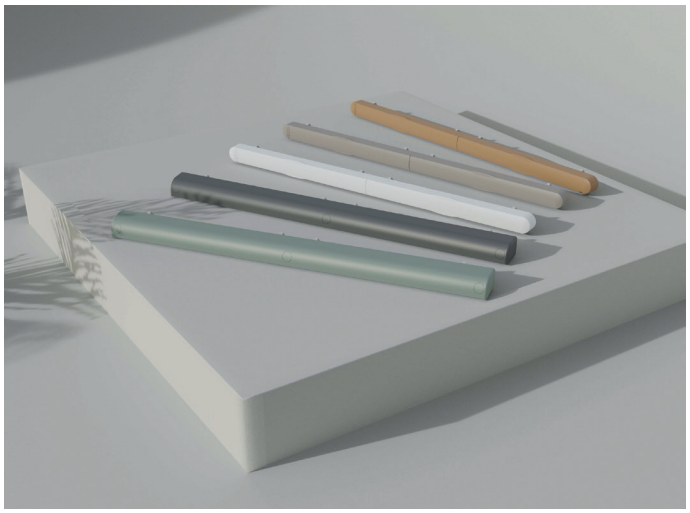
Plastic injection moulder Glazpart emphasises the growing consumer demand for aesthetic appeal in home products and how offering customised colour options sets it apart from competitors.

When it comes to keeping customers and in particular consumers satisfied, then proposing plastic products can sometimes be quite tricky. Not that plastic in itself is an undesirable material or product. Far from it, it is very popular. According to the British Plastics Federation (BPF), the UK Plastics Industry is made up of around 5,700 companies worth £28.7 billion in revenue to the UK economy whilst directly employing approximately 150,000 people.

The popularity of plastic is due to multiple factors. It is lightweight, easy to maintain/clean, inexpensive and very durable. The advantages go on with its high flexibility (it can be moulded into practically any shape and almost any size), functionality with good thermal and insulation properties, and non-corrosive and resistance to chemicals. Add environmental qualities such as sustainability and recyclability, and it is easy to see why plastic is a popular material of choice.

With so much going for it, why is there still some resistance when it comes to choosing plastic products?

Quite often it can simply come down to aesthetics. It perhaps doesn't look quite right, sometimes inappropriate when used with other materials such as metals or timber.



With appearance becoming a decisive factor, manufacturers face a major challenge; to overcome customer resistance they have to bring plastic to life and this is where colour and decorative finishes offer the solution.

Colour plays a big part in everyday life from clothing to interior decor, to cars and furniture and so on. In construction and in particular the window and door sectors, colour is becoming increasingly important as homeowners expect the perfect finish to their property whatever type of window or door is being installed.

With colour becoming more important for homeowners, window manufacturers and installers have to be flexible and make sure their products are either; available in a wide range of different colours or can be made to the exact colour specified by their customers.

Companies also need to ensure they are not only making and installing quality products to customers' specifications but are also dealing with reliable and flexible suppliers that can deliver the right matching or complementary colours that meet homeowners' expectations.

With an ever-competitive marketplace, combined with the increasing consumer focus on aesthetics, plastic injection moulder Glazpart has had to plan accordingly to stay ahead.

> "Companies also need to ensure they are dealing with reliable and flexible suppliers that can deliver the right matching or complementary colours that meet homeowners' expectations."

Over the last ten years, Glazpart has consistently invested in high-performance machinery, systems and tooling to manufacture a vast spectrum of colours and finishes for its ranges of components and accessories. This investment has placed the company in a pole position to supply components of all colours and/or decorative finishes to multiple markets.

An example of this exceptional flexibility can be seen in Glazpart's award-winning trickle vent - the Link Vent range - which can be used for any type (wood, uPVC, aluminium) of window or door.

As demand for differentiation increases due to the wider consumer choice of windows and doors, and with regulatory changes (June 2022), Glazpart leads the way in the development and easy availability of trickle vents that come in more than just the most common colours of white and grey.

Some of the most popular colours in the Link Vent range include Chartwell Green, Anthracite Grey, Redwood, Black and Cream. Link Vents can also be camouflaged on window profiles in over 40 moulded system house colours, with finishes to also match embossed and woodgrain patterned foils. The vents can even be sprayed at source to match aluminium RAL colours.

Glazpart launched the innovative Link Vent in 2013 and since then, with the addition of the Link Vent 4000, in 2022, the Link Vent has become an ideal ventilation solution for building designers, window

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manufacturers, installers and homeowners.

Dean Bradley, sales director of Glazpart explained: "Homeowners have become more particular when it comes to choosing windows and doors, and the finished appearance is a huge factor. As such, window manufacturers and installers need to ensure they can meet homeowner's demands by offering the widest range possible. Glazpart's Link Vent range can colour match a vast range of window frame foils and though we hold healthy stock levels, we can always manufacture at short notice to ensure our customers have the products readily available."

Smart design, easy fitting, and functionality are fundamentals when it comes to plastic product manufacturing, but it is the huge choice of colours and decorative finishes that sets Glazpart apart from the competition.

Glazpart is an approved colour paint sprayer for many paint systems developed for application onto plastic. The spray systems are special coatings designed to paint uPVC and other hard plastics such as ABS, polycarbonate and acrylic where the systems form a molecular cross bond with the plastic surface.

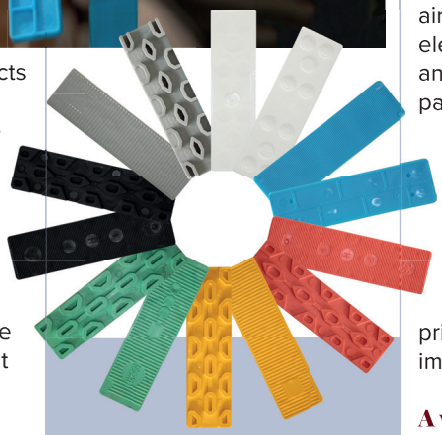
Glazpart offers all standard RAL (European Colour Systems) and BS (British Standards) colours and can match most other colour systems. The company also has a specialist colour-matching service that can match non-standard colours and supplied colour samples.

In addition to the aesthetic appeal, the colours and



finishes on Glazpart's products have great durability. The colours are extremely stable and resistant to ultraviolet rays (UV), so homeowners can be safe in the knowledge that the vents will hold their colour in extreme weather conditions and constant exposure to the elements of weather, without noticeable fading.

With investment in market research and development, advanced machinery, staff development and expertise, Glazpart can offer customers the widest possible choice. When it comes to the manufacture and supply of plastic components for multiple sectors including; glazing, construction, manufacturing, engineering, furniture, automotive and medical devices, Glazpart's true colours certainly come to the fore.



"Smart design, easy fitting, and functionality are fundamentals when it comes to plastic product manufacturing."

Innovative Solutions for Modern Needs:

The role of in-house print departments in plastic manufacturing

The demand for versatile, durable, and aesthetically pleasing plastic products that are fit-for-purpose and sustainable is higher than ever. Plastic manufacturing companies with in-house print departments, equipped with large format, flatbed printers, and screen-printing capabilities are at the forefront of meeting these needs. Combine printing and innovative protective hard coating technologies, and these departments offer unique, bespoke solutions for a wide range of applications, from wall cladding and signage to feature walls, printed noise barriers, airport/railway displays, electronic display screens and specialised clean room panels.

Here, Peerless Coatings explores the value and versatility of in-house print departments in meeting the demands of the modern market touching on specific printing techniques and the importance of sustainability.

A versatile print department

In-house print departments usually utilise large format and flatbed printers alongside advanced screen-printing technology to meet the diverse needs of clients across various industries.

- **Large Format Printing** is ideal for creating expansive, vibrant graphics suitable for wall cladding, signage, feature walls and printed noise barriers, to name a few.
- **Flatbed Printing** provides the flexibility to print directly onto various plastic substrates, ensuring high-resolution images and precise colour reproduction, making it suitable for detailed designs and intricate patterns.
- **Screen Printing** adds another dimension to product offerings, enabling the production of custom designs with exceptional durability.

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- **Eco-Friendly Inks** in modern printing processes align with growing sustainability demands. These inks reduce environmental impact while maintaining high-quality print results.

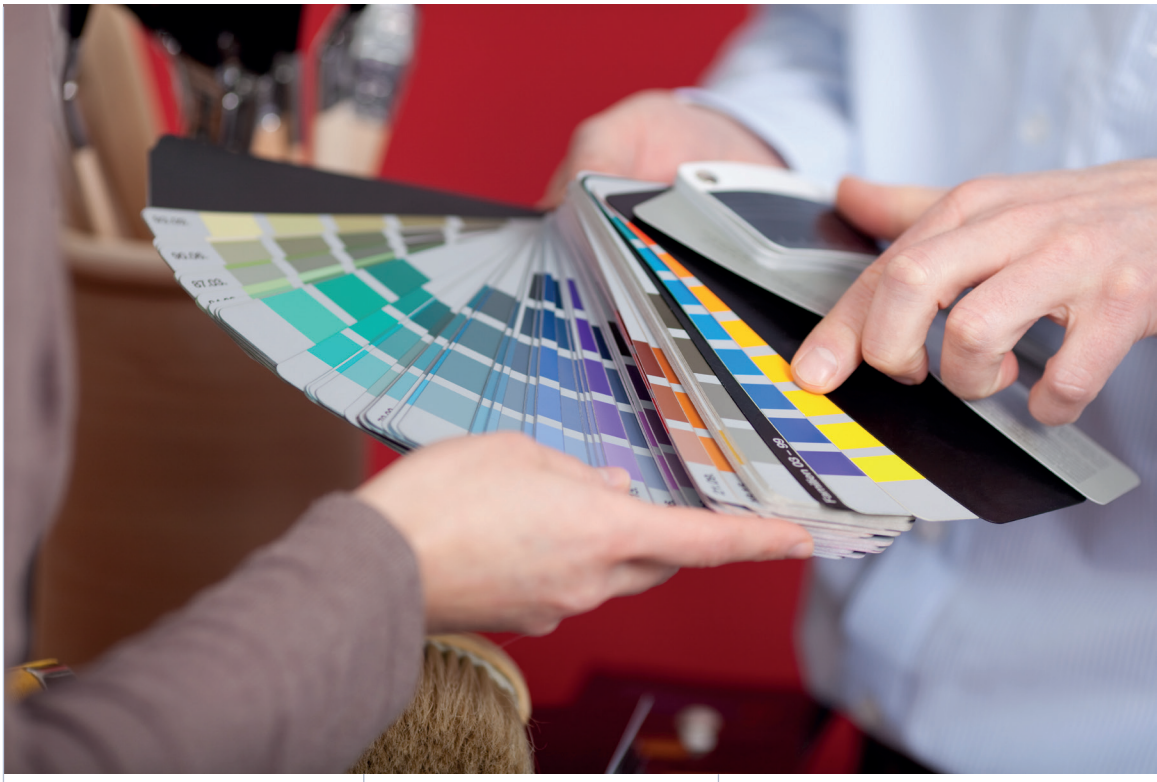
Adding functionality

Enhancing printed plastic panels with proprietary hard-coating technology ensures that the final products are not only visually appealing but also incredibly durable and functional.

- **Protective hard coatings:** After printing, the plastic panels are coated with a very thin, scratch-resistant layer that makes the panels ideal for high-traffic areas.
- **Anti-microbial coatings:** For environments where hygiene is critical, such as in hospitals, anti-microbial coating options inhibit the growth of bacteria and mould, ensuring a safer and more sanitary surface.
- **Ease of cleaning and maintenance:** Hard-coated panels are easier and faster to clean, reducing maintenance time and costs.
- **Ease of installation:** Hard-coated wall cladding panels are designed for easier and faster installation compared to traditional wall covering materials, providing a more convenient and cost-effective solution for customers.

Commitment to quality and sustainability

Quality is evident in every aspect of most in-house print departments. From the selection of premium materials to the use of advanced printing and coating technologies, these departments ensure that each product meets the highest standards of performance and durability.



In addition to quality, sustainability is a core value. Many print departments employ eco-friendly practices throughout their manufacturing process, including the use of energy-efficient UV curing technology, solar panels for their energy, and eco-friendly inks. By prioritising sustainability, these operations not only reduce their environmental footprint but also provide environmentally responsible solutions for their customers.

Customer-centric approach

Customer satisfaction is paramount. In-house print departments work closely with clients to understand their specific needs and deliver customised solutions that exceed expectations. Whether it's a large-scale project or a small bespoke order, exceptional service and support are provided every step of the way.

The ability to offer tailored designs and coatings means that clients can achieve the exact look and functionality they require. Teams of experts are always on hand to provide guidance, from the initial design phase through to the production and installation of the product(s).

> "The ability to offer tailored designs and coatings means that clients can achieve the exact look and functionality they require."

Innovation and future outlook

Ongoing research and development efforts focus on improving coating formulations, expanding printing capabilities, and exploring new market opportunities. The vision for the future includes expanding its global presence and strengthening partnerships with distributors and clients worldwide.

By staying at the forefront of industry trends and technological advancements, companies with in-house print departments are well-positioned to meet the evolving needs of their customers and maintain their leadership in the market.

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COLUMN

Dave Raine

Adapting exhibitions to the modern customer



Since the last column, Plastics Live has taken place, and Sumitomo (SHI) Demag has taken their Roadshow 2024 around Ireland and the UK, exhibiting at four locations. Exhibitions have long been a cornerstone of company strategies, providing businesses with an opportunity to showcase their innovations and services directly to a targeted audience. However, in recent years, many companies have observed a troubling trend: a significant decline in customer participation at these events, and unfortunately, this seems to be a continuing problem. Although participating companies almost unanimously use the 'quality not quantity' line post-event, this phenomenon raises questions about its underlying causes and implications for businesses striving to maintain engagement and drive growth.

Primarily contributing to the decline in customer participation at exhibitions is the shifting landscape of customer behaviour. Today's customers are more digitally inclined, with a preference for online interactions over physical events. The convenience of virtual experiences, coupled with the rise of social media, means that customers often find it easier to engage with brands from the comfort of their workplace. This digital transformation has led to a decreased interest in attending physical exhibitions, where the time and effort required can be perceived as burdensome. Virtual exhibitions and online webinars have become viable alternatives to traditional trade shows, offering interactive features, real-time communication and a global reach. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift, forcing many companies to pivot to virtual formats. As a result, customers have grown accustomed to these digital interactions, further diminishing their inclination to participate in physical exhibitions.

From the customer's perspective, attending exhibitions often involves considerable costs and logistical challenges. Travel expenses, accommodation, and valuable time away from work or personal commitments can deter participation, especially in the current climate. In contrast, virtual events eliminate these barriers, offering a cost-effective and convenient solution. The disparity in convenience between physical and virtual exhibitions has increasingly influenced customer choices, contributing to the declining attendance at traditional events.

Another critical aspect is the quality of experience provided at exhibitions. Customers seek engaging and memorable interactions that add value beyond mere product displays and make attendance worthwhile. Exhibitions that fail to offer interactive or educational experiences may struggle to attract and retain participants. In a competitive landscape, where attention spans are dwindling, the ability to capture and sustain interest is paramount. Exhibitors must evolve to meet these expectations by incorporating interactive elements, live demonstrations and personalised engagements.

To counteract the decline in customer participation, businesses must adopt innovative strategies that bridge the gap between physical and digital experiences. Hybrid events, which combine in-person and virtual elements, offer a promising solution.

Additionally, enhancing pre-event engagement through targeted marketing campaigns and social media interactions can also boost participation whether through sneak peeks or exclusive content.

That being said, fixed and mobile exhibitions still seem to have issues with footfall and engagement - the decline in customer participation at exhibitions is a complicated issue driven by evolving customer behaviour, technical advancements, and the demand for convenience and quality experiences. If we in the plastics industry are to get the absolute maximum from exhibitions and shows, we must recognise these changes and adapt strategies to remain relevant and engaging. By changing from the traditional 'old school' approach to exhibiting and demonstrating products and technologies, companies can revitalise customer interest and ensure that exhibitions continue to be a valuable tool in the marketing arsenal.

Dave Raine
Chairman, PMMDA



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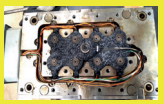
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COLUMN

Philip Law

BPF's *Philip Law* invites the plastics industry to GRIPS 2024, a major industry conference to explore innovations in sustainability and commemorate the legacy of former BPF president David Williams.

Get to GRIPS!



Get to GRIPS on the 19th of September! This unique event on Global Innovation on Sustainable Plastics is to be held at The University of Sheffield and should be a priority date for all those who are serious about the sustainability of plastics. It is co-hosted by the British Plastics Federation (BPF) and the government's Innovate UK. The BPF is proud to play a part in staging this event. It will cover innovation in plastic materials, products, processes, logistics and infrastructure. It will also feature many thought leaders on plastics and sustainability. The event has been made possible by a financial award from The Worshipful Company of Horners, originating in the generosity of Jane Williams who made a bequest to the Horners in memory of her late husband, David Williams, a former very distinguished president of the BPF and a past Master of the Horners' Company.

As someone who knew David well, I can't think of a finer way of perpetuating his memory. He had a particular interest in those sustainability innovations which brought social benefits. He also loved attending industry events where he could maintain his immensely wide range of contacts. We do hope that you will attend and participate in the conference sessions and panel debates, visit exhibition stands and widen your networks. It will be a unique occasion both on account of its immensely broad coverage, through the involvement of universities and industry together, and of course, for many, the memories it will evoke of working with David Williams.

The legislative programme announced during the recent King's speech, foreseeing the preparation of some 40 Parliamentary Bills, was hugely ambitious. As a manager keen to keep staff focused on priorities, I can see the dangers of a scatter-gun approach. I hope that the government has the resources - both in civil service expertise and financially - to be able to pull this off. We will be following progress closely but, at the end of the day, what will count is how the sum of all new government actions will affect the competitiveness of UK plastics.

BPF has been exhorting its members to make contact with new MPs and facilitated this by drafting a template letter for companies to send. We also provided a post-election manifesto to remind MPs of our top priorities. These included; accepting UK plastics as a 'foundation industry' and seeing improvements in the waste management of plastics, in particular, acceptance of mass balance measurement techniques for chemical recycling. We also want our competitiveness sharpened up by a major national skills upgrade. Like many other sectors, we have been calling for a review of the apprenticeship levy. We have also asked for a review of support for exports through trade fairs and also an alignment of legislation with EU laws where it makes sense, so we do not end up duplicating compliance costs.

BPF has already coordinated the preparation of a submission to the newly appointed exchequer secretary, James Murray MP, pressing for a response to last July's consultation on the role of mass balance in chemical recycling. Governments are not allowed honeymoons!

In the meantime, I do hope to see as many of you as possible at GRIPS on September 19th, a date I hope is burnt into your hearts.



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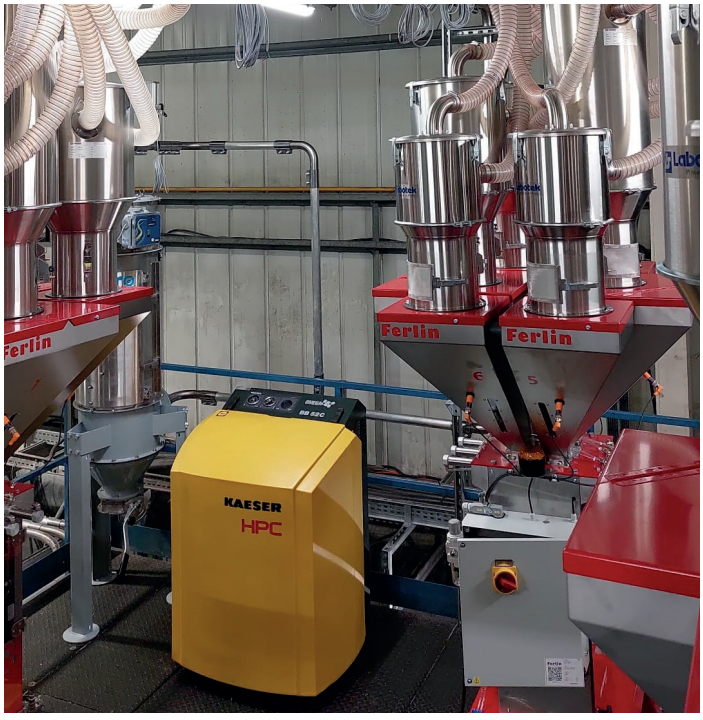


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