

## Omega growing in toolmaking, molding

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PLASTICS NEWS CORRESPONDENT

MOUNT CLEMENS, MICH. (Oct. 16, 10:45 a.m. EDT) -- Omega Plastics Inc. of Mount Clemens has added staff and, over two years, invested about \$1.8 million to grow in toolmaking and lower-volume injection molding.

"We want to help customers get into the market more effectively" through advanced engineering and manufacturing processes, said Jeff Kaczperski, Omega president and chief executive officer.

Industry veteran Len Graham joined Omega in August as director of tooling engineering. Graham has two patents and another in the publishing phase, authored the 1996 textbook *What Is A Mold?* and has decades of innovative mold-making and automation experience including "super cell" development work.

Omega has added two high-speed Makino mills, an OKK graphite mill for electrodes, a Fanuc wire electrical discharge machine and a Mitsubishi computer numerically controlled sinker EDM. "We tied together the first robotic cell with EDMs and a mill" in mid-2005, Kaczperski said.



Jeff Kaczperski

Omega acquired a Brown & Sharpe coordinate-measuring machine for inspection and upgraded to Pro/Engineer's Wirefire 3.0 with mold-making extensions and Mastercam X software.

On the plastics processing side, Omega added a 400-ton Milacron press in May and a 55-ton Arburg horizontal-vertical last year. Omega operates 18 presses with clamping forces of 55-400 tons, most of which are Milacrons. It also does insert molding and overmolding. Omega's low- and medium-volume annual production can run up to 50,000 shots or, depending on cavitation, 100,000 pieces.

Speaking about market direction, Graham said original equipment manufacturers "will want prototype tooling at first to get an idea if the market wants the product."

"They are not committed to production tooling at that point, but if they are not first to market, they lose a big percentage" of sales, he said.

Omega is encouraging customers to go into fully hardened bridge tooling for long-term pre-production. "We can get them some lessons learned so they do not have to wait until a production tool is available," Graham said.

"If we build pre-hardened tools in steel, they can become the spares for the production tools."

The firm shares prototype and pre-production parameters with customers taking delivery of Omega tools for molding elsewhere. "We push information out of the building to customers," Kaczperski said.

Omega was launched in 1984 as a prototype tool and mold-sampling shop and transitioned with the market in the late 1990s to accommodate more sample and pre-production services, including low-volume molding.

Mike Pavlica, vice president of finance and operations, said the company plans to buy more equipment next year.

Omega's 70,000-square-foot site employs 65, with 25 on the toolmaking team and 30 for injection molding work.

Kaczperski projects 2006 sales of \$10.5 million to \$11 million. Last year's figure was \$9 million. End markets include medical, consumer packaging, automotive and electronics.

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