PMM
Plastic Molding
MANUFACTURING
America's Technology Molder





# Meeting Challenges and ENHANCING SERVICES



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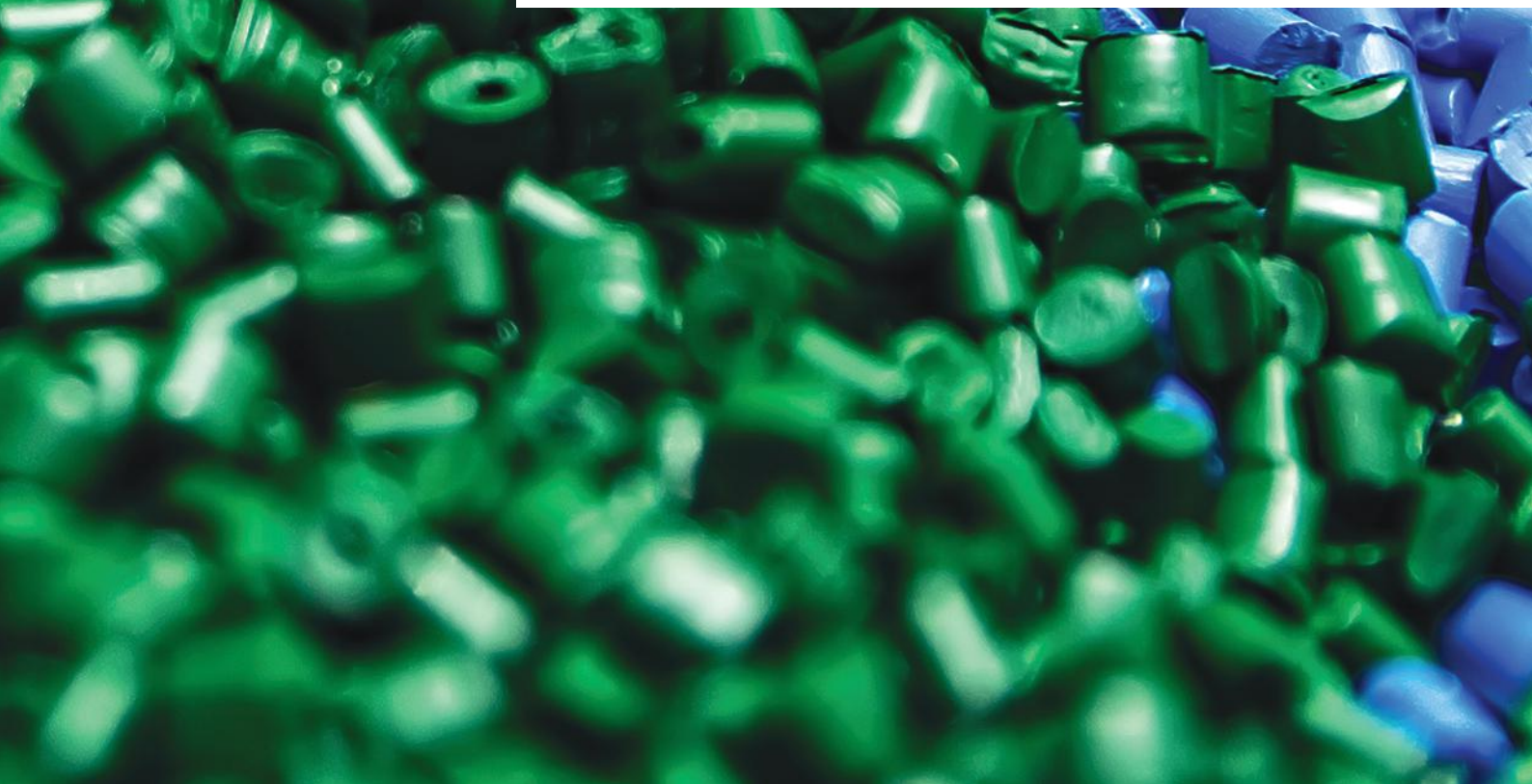
George Danis
CEO of PMM

**Written by Nate Hendley**

Plastic Molding Manufacturing (PMM) of Hudson, Massachusetts is flourishing, despite a shortage of skilled labor and other challenges. Since it was last profiled in April 2020 in ***Manufacturing in Focus***, the company has continued doing what it does best: manufacturing plastic components according to precise client specifications. The decades-old company also offers design and tooling and engineering, among other services, but plastic injection molding remains central to its mission.

"Molding is our number one business task," states CEO George Danis. "We design the molds to the customer's requirements."

From its base in Hudson, PMM has expanded over the years, acquiring new companies, some of which have been directly folded into its operations. At present, it has manufacturing facilities in Hudson as well as Berlin, Connecticut; Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and South Bend, Indiana. Approximately 220 people are employed within the company.






PMM performs injection molding, two-shot molding, insert molding, scientific molding, cleanroom molding, overmolding, and welding and milling. The design and tooling offering utilizes electrical discharge machining techniques and computer numerical control machine tools to produce tooling according to customer specifications. In addition to engineering, it offers mold maintenance, repair, and revisions to extend mold life and enhance quality.

The company also boasts an ISO Class 8 cleanroom. Within this space, clean air pressure is continuously maintained with HEPA filters; temperature and humidity are tightly controlled, and particulate matter is monitored. Rotary and horizontal injection molding machines in the cleanroom are used to make medical-related items.

The specific plastic resins and other materials that go into PMM molds are often dictated by the client. "Many times, the customer requires a specific material from a specific supplier. We're flexible, and we work with [many] suppliers. We have good relations with them because of the number of processes that we do," explains Danis.

The company subcontracts some of the tooling and purchases raw material from outside vendors but otherwise self-performs most services, he adds.

Quality is inherent in everything PMM does; the firm has ISO certification and is compliant with ITAR and UL regulations. The International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) is a U.S. specification for designing, making, or selling military and space-related products and services. The UL seal is granted to companies around the world that meet stringent safety criteria.

PMM serves the medical, industrial, transportation, electronics, connectors, consumer, and defense markets. Its medical applications include surgical instruments, eye treatment devices, single-use medical disposables, orthopedic products, and diagnostic equipment. The company makes transportation components for the railroad industry, automotive original equipment manufacturers, and after-market automotive firms while its electronics work focuses on components for insulators, housings, micro-switches, and connectors. A sister company called Electro-Mechanical Technology, also based in Hudson, executes quick-turn precision printed circuit board assembly, harness and cable assembly, testing, design, and other duties.

For industrial clients, PMM produces components for filtration systems, analysis equipment, control units and instrumentation housings while defense assignments involve firearms and military weapon systems. The company also has customers in the footwear, pet care, cosmetics, and jewelry consumer sectors. For the connector market, it offers latches and molds circuit holes.

Its global client base of past and present customers includes Boston Scientific, 3M, General Electric, Harley-Davidson, and other large corporations. PMM aims for balance, with no one market accounting for more than ten to twelve percent of overall revenue. It is a smart business practice that has done it well. "We try to spread it somewhat evenly as much as we can," explains Danis, adding that he would like to build the company's market presence in certain sectors. "We always like to expand in the medical [field]."

While COVID did not have a significant impact on PMM's workforce "with the exception of two people [who picked up the virus] at home. They recovered and are back with us full time," Danis is, however, deeply concerned about other trends within the manufacturing sector.

For the past few decades, North American companies have increasingly relied on low-cost suppliers in Asia. Transporting molds, parts and products from Asian locales is a time-consuming process. Off-shore costs have increased, and there are lingering quality issues regarding molds made in some third-world locales. Repairing these sub-standard molds is not an easy task when they must be shipped across the Pacific Ocean.

With all this in mind, Danis encourages U.S. firms to re-shore their operations or, at the least, consider working with suppliers that offer better quality and more reliable service. "We are working very diligently to move some items out of Asia and have been partnering with people in Southern Europe that we find to be [better] quality-wise," he says.

His views are based on decades of experience as founder. The roots of Plastic Molding Manufacturing go back to 1968. In the early days, it provided contract manufacturing services for personal computer board assembly and plastic injection molding. The company's reputation grew as did its corporate footprint.

In 2010, PMM bought Res-Tech Corporation, a Massachusetts-based plastic molding manufacturer. Three years later, it bought Tech Atlantic, Inc., which also did plastic injection molding. In 2014, it purchased Northeast Mold, an injection molding firm with a specialty in two-shot molding processes. Later that same year, a fourth purchase was made when it acquired True Precision Plastics in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

The next purchase was a company in South Bend, Indiana called Aucilla Plastics. In late 2019, PMM bought the Phillips-Moldex Company in Connecticut and consolidated this business with its Hudson operations.

Danis is eager to continue growing by making new acquisitions. At the time of interview, he was in the process of negotiating the purchase of a firm in the Midwest. Regardless of how this latest deal transpires, "We are definitely in the market to acquire more companies."

Given the number of firms it has purchased over the years, the company does not favor any one brand of injection molding machine. "Because we acquired six companies in last nine years, we have a variety of machines and different suppliers, different manufacturers," he explains.

With such a large corporate presence, it is also understandable that labor, or the lack thereof, is another major preoccupation. Across North America, there has been a decided shortage of skilled labor as existing workers reach retirement age and not enough young people enter the sector to replace them. It is an ongoing problem that was exacerbated by the COVID pandemic which led to some business shutdowns and closures.

"This shortage has been affecting every industry in the country as well as around the world," Danis notes.

PMM has taken a proactive approach to dealing with this problem. Six months ago, it hired a pair of recruiters and set up an initiative to "to try to find people," he continues. "It has been effective, and we're very pleased with it. On the technical side, they have to have technical expertise—three to five years' worth," he says of the type of people that the company is looking to hire. "We also train people. The most important thing, really, is attitude and a desire to improve themselves, to be focused on learning. We offer quite good benefits."

Danis has discussed the labor shortage issue with government officials and recounts conversations about incentives to encourage unemployed people to return to work. He has another suggestion for politicians as well. He advocates closer economic ties with South America, as opposed to Asia.

"If I were to advise our government, I would look at it to connect and industrialize the Americas. They have 500 million people in South America and are hungry for jobs. We became attached to Asia, and it's really a calamity for our economy and future," he states.

As another way of coping with the labor shortage, Danis has been working to increase the level of automation in PMM plants. This includes the use of robots at work stations and conveyors to transport products inside factories.

Another technological innovation—three-dimensional (3D) printing (or additive manufacturing)—has also caught his eye. Danis is considering getting a 3D printer, but just for doing prototypes. While these printers are great at producing one-off items, "The quantity we're looking for cannot be done on a 3D printer," he says. "Every plastic injection molder wants quantity."

Meanwhile, he wants to continue to improve PMM's already impressive quality, service, and delivery. He says he is determined to fulfill this goal even in the face of "material costs increasing and labor costs increasing."

Despite all the challenges, Danis offers an optimistic forecast. "I started the company a few years back, and I'm very excited by our growth and technology, and servicing customers and society… Sometimes we take our associates for granted. I want to express my gratitude on behalf of our customers and our whole organization. We are very, very excited," he says of the future. Five years down the road, Danis would like to have "at least seven, eight [manufacturing] plants and expand nationally," through acquisitions and organic growth. ■

**Content Developed by Jamal Francis-Anderson**







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