

Moldmaker/Molder "Doubles Down" With Technology Investment

By Sherry L. Baranek

Micro Mold Co., Inc. and Plastikos Inc.—sister companies that are based in Erie, PA—have committed to investing \$18 million in capital expenditures this year, which will further increase moldmaking capacity and cleanroom molding and further solidify its niche as a medical moldmaker/molder.

The Micro Mold facility is investing in new equipment in automation and robotics, which Micro Mold General Manager Ryan Katen points out will enable the company to provide more 3D EDM work, lights-out operations and overall efficiency, quality and capability expansions. "We already have a very large investment in technology," Katen says. "We're considering the current infusion of capital as 'doubling down' on our mold shop. At a time when many others are exiting the

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speed Mori Seiki CNC—and are tying that into a System 3R robot to alleviate the bottleneck in the EDM department and thus further reduce our leadtimes," Katen explains. "We are quoting a lot of multiple tool packages and much of that work requires these types of machines."

The company recently added a cleanroom to focus on its medical customer base at its Plastikos facility, and the resulting medical business is approaching an all-time high, notes Micro Mold's. "Our existing medical customers have grown and we are in the works of building up some other medical accounts while looking to acquire some new ones," Katen emphasizes. "We are running out of capacity so hence the expansion. We want to provide even better service—and qual-

ity—for existing and potential customers."

The addition of an 88-ton Arburg cleanroom molding press effectively increases the company's molding capacity by 50 percent, Katen notes, and brings the total number of presses to three. "This allows us to meet the rising demand in this market while giving us the ability to offer Class 10,000 (ISO 7) cleanroom molding—a rare capability amongst contract molders," he comments.

Katen adds this is a short-term expansion. "We are looking at some other options for a longer term expansion to further increase our capacities, but for right now this third press gets us to the next stepping stone—growing organically and not trying to do too much, but keeping up with the demand we are seeing."

Katen is confident that these investments will pay off in the long-term and result in the company's continued success. "We are just making sure that we are current with equipment and technology that we need to continue to support the medical industry and its demanding leadtimes." **MMT**

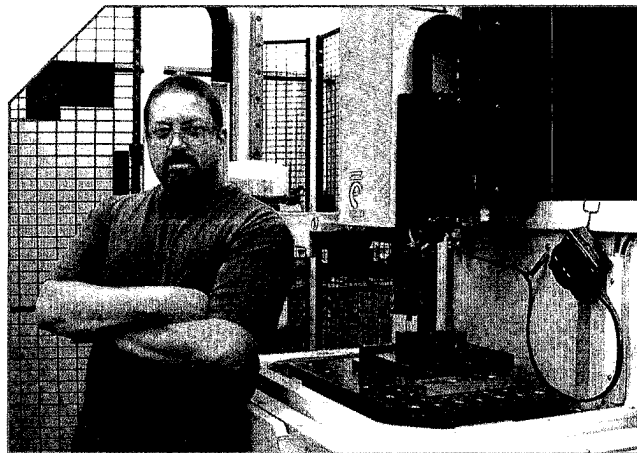


Photo courtesy of Micro Mold Co. Inc.

Micro Mold employee Steve Shultz in front of the company's CNC EDM cell. Plans are underway to add a second cell.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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