

know-how

the magazine

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Supply chain solutions & value-added services

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Still the preferred choice
for plastics processors

Plastribution Limited
Clinitron House
Excelsior Road
Ashby Business Park
Ashby-de-la-Zouch
LE65 1JG

Tel: +44 (0) 1530 560560
Fax: +44 (0) 1530 560303
Email: sales@plastribution.co.uk
www.plastribution.co.uk



Mike Boswell
Managing Director



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This magazine is printed using vegetable oil based inks on paper that contains fibre from sustainably managed forests.



Design: Voice
www.realworldthinking.co

Content: Marbles PR
www.marblespr.co.uk

Welcome to know-how

Welcome to this latest edition of Know-how Magazine. As you will read in the following pages it has again been a very busy period and there are many exciting developments in our business that will continue to bring increasing value to both our customers and suppliers.

As I write this introduction the majority of the UK plastics processing sector is preoccupied with the current issues of polymer supply and the subsequent impact on pricing. Many have referred to the current situation as 'the perfect storm' and in my 26 years in this sector of the plastics industry I do not recall such a desperate situation within which many processors are unable to secure sufficient raw material to support manufacturing operations. Whilst in the short term the current situation is expected to ease towards the middle of the year as supply improves, in the longer term plastic processors will need to adapt to longer supply chains and the need to compete for supply on a global basis as the supply / demand balance in Western Europe continues to move in favour of imports. This will inevitably increase the importance of businesses such as Plastribution as partners in the supply chain.

Moving away from the pressing issue of raw material availability and pricing, the UK economy continues to perform well. In particular the manufacturing and construction sectors have largely recovered to above the pre-economic crisis levels and their immediate future looks assured with strong levels of investment in the processing sector. The economic markets responded

positively to the outcome of May's general election and in so doing providing a clear mandate for a continuation in economic policy within which we expect the manufacturing sector to continue to feature as a vital component of a re-balanced UK economy.

As many of you will be aware my two-year term as President of the BPF came to an end in May and you will be able to read a more detailed report on my term in office later in this publication. It has been a privilege to serve the UK's plastics industry in this capacity and it is a particular honour being the first president from the distribution sector. I believe that I have left the BPF in at least as good condition as when I took the role two years ago and I hope to continue my contribution for many years to come.

It was with immense sadness that we learnt that our friend and colleague Dave Machin died at the end of May as a result of medical complications, following an operation he underwent just after Easter. Along with customers suppliers and former colleagues we were deeply shocked by the loss of a much-respected figure in our industry. Dave had worked at Plastribution since November 2002 and previously was employed by Borealis. Our thoughts very much remain with his wife, two sons, family and friends who will deeply mourn the loss of this great man.

Since the last edition of Know-how Magazine Plastribution has been fortunate to be recognised as a Best Companies one star award winner. This along with both the results of our

most recent Customer Satisfaction Survey and the confirmation by AMI in their 2014 survey that Plastribution remains the UK's leading distributor, bears great testimony to the amazing team of people here at Plastribution and the great service they deliver on a daily basis.

In the important area of communication many of you will have seen that we continue to remain active through traditional channels such as the industry press, exhibitions and conferences. We now have a social media presence in the shape of a Twitter feed, as well as a recently launched blog on our website. Additionally, we continue to use e-shots as means of promoting products and services to our customers and prospects.

Along with communication, education remains a key component of our activity. Not only do we continue to develop both the skills and knowledge of our teams, we also continue to provide training to our customers - a brand new course on understanding the polymer supply chain was launched earlier in the year.

Finally I would like to acknowledge that our business depends upon your custom and I sincerely hope that our efforts to deliver value in terms of service, reliability and price ensures that we continue to be the preferred choice of UK plastics processors. 🌈

Regards,

Mike Boswell
Managing Director

Customer Satisfaction Survey 2014

Our second phone-based customer satisfaction survey took place during the latter part of 2014. We were eager to once again benchmark our performance, and compare your comments and views against those made in 2013.

As you will know, providing excellent customer service is imperative to our business. We like to think that we do a good job, but as ever, there is always room for improvement.

Our aim has always been to provide you with a seamless service, in that once our customer service teams have received your request, they will quickly act on your requirement and, where necessary and appropriate, keep you informed as to progress.

Through this 'consider it done' business philosophy we are confident that our current service offering is one of the best in the industry. This level of service has been achieved by constantly improving our processes and systems and ensuring that our people are given the necessary tools to do the job. We select our team members, continually train and develop them, provide excellent resources and empower them to provide you with the services that you say matter.

There is no single pre-requisite for being a successful polymer distributor. As with any business, there are a number of key areas to focus on to ensure success. One of which is

having the ability to fully understand what customers expect and being able to demonstrate a deep understanding of each customer's needs, opinions and satisfaction.

Customers are the sole judge of service quality. At Plastribution we understand the importance of evaluating how we perform against customer service expectations and, importantly, what we need to do to raise our game when necessary. Judging by the feedback in our recent survey we did exactly that; we are delighted to tell you that in all bar one comparative question, we improved in our service delivery right across the board!

To all of you who spared the time and provided us with insights, our thanks and appreciation - your feedback is invaluable. To those of you who we haven't yet asked for your views, we could be knocking on your doors later in the year as we look to repeat the process for 2015.

Clearly, it goes without saying that we will be implementing any highlighted improvement measures and will spotlight these during the course of the year. 

Following an impressive 71% response rate, here are some of the highlights from our recent customer survey:

100%



said that they thought Plastribution personnel are knowledgeable about products, services and processes.

97%

said they were satisfied with the level of customer service they receive.

100%

said that they were either totally satisfied or satisfied that Plastribution provides a reliable service.

89%

said there was no room for improvement.

No wonder that Plastribution has retained its position as the industry's No.1 polymer distributor!*

*Source: AMI European Polymer Distribution Survey 2014



Best Companies One Star Award....



In August 2014 and as part of our marketing strategy, Plastribution took part in The Sunday Times Best Companies to Work For accreditation scheme.

The exercise, primarily an employee satisfaction survey that measures employees' levels of fulfilment, motivation and engagement, was aimed at achieving a better understanding of Plastribution's 'make-up', to see what makes us function as a business and, importantly, to identify any shortfalls and areas for improvement.

Working in conjunction with our retained marketing communications firm, Marbles PR, the initial process concentrated on communication and explaining to all members of staff what was expected from their participation, why we needed to benchmark and evaluate, and what could be expected in terms of outcomes.

For purposes of the survey, 'Plastribution group' included the main thermoplastics business, our films distribution division Plasfilms, and our dyes and chemicals supplier, Derbyshire based LJ Specialities.

Once all employees had been 'briefed', each was given the opportunity to fill out a confidential survey online, with instructions to return the survey direct to Best Companies once completed - a time window of 4 weeks was allocated to this task. As the survey process drew to a close, we could see from an online dashboard on the Best Companies website that we were very close to achieving a 100% return rate - given that surveys generally are unpopular, this was an achievement in itself! All staff deserve a big public 'thank you' for taking the time to complete the detailed questionnaire.

Just to be clear on the processes involved with the scheme, companies can sign up to a straightforward Best Companies accreditation, which is based on a three star scoring system. The specific cut-off points for One, Two, and Three Star Accreditation remain constant year on year so any company achieving the required BCI score will always be accredited.



The BCI score applies equally to organisations of all sizes. With The Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to Work For and Best Places to Work in the Public & Charity Sectors Top lists, companies within the UK and Northern Ireland are able to enter into categories dependent on their size as follows:

- 🎯 Best Small Companies:
50 - 249 employees
- 🎯 Best Mid-sized Companies:
250 - 3,499 employees
- 🎯 Best Big Companies:
3500+ employees

The Sunday Times 100 Best Companies To Work For list has a massive impact at the time of publication, whereas the Best Companies Guide is a constant, year-round reminder of an organisation's status of being an exceptional place to work.

Plastribution entered both the Best Companies scheme and The Sunday Times 100 Best Companies To Work For list.

The scoring was based on responses to the following eight key factors: Once all our surveys had been scored, Best Companies formally communicated our result – see the illustration on the right hand side.

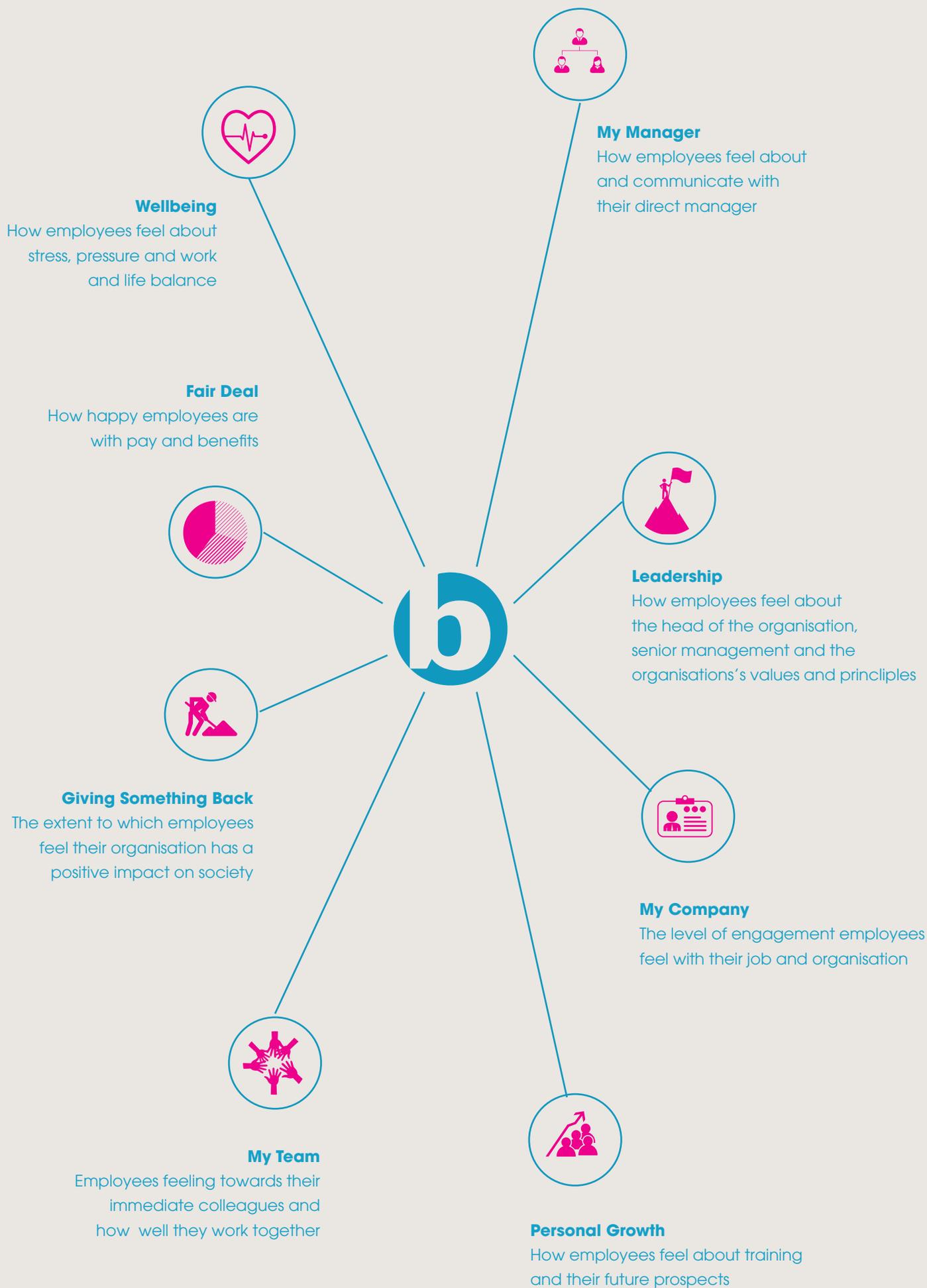
For the 2015 Best Companies survey, a total of 428,710 employees were surveyed across 791 businesses and Plastribution was one of 200 businesses to achieve a one star rating. It wasn't enough to make the The Sunday Times 100 Best Companies To Work For list, but it was still a fantastic achievement on our first 'outing'.

Commenting on the process, Plastribution's Mike Boswell said: "We're extremely proud to have achieved a one star accreditation in The Sunday Times Best Companies to Work For scheme. It's a fantastic achievement and a testament to all our hardworking staff. Being a Best Companies is about excelling in every area throughout the workplace and an organisation's commitment to its most important assets - its workforce.

"Focusing on employees brings real benefits such as, improved workplace engagement, better staff retention, reduced recruitment costs and greater financial performance. Plastribution strives to ensure the environment that its employees work within is outstanding, with personal development plans, team-building workshops and incentive schemes offered to employees." 🎯

“We're extremely proud to have achieved a one star accreditation in The Sunday Times Best Companies to Work For scheme. It's a fantastic achievement and a testament to all our hardworking staff. Being a best company is about excelling in every area throughout the workplace and an organisation's commitment to its most important assets - its workforce.”

Mike Boswell
Managing Director



Joining the rat race or social brownie points?

The last 25 years has witnessed a communication revolution from the early analogue 'mobile' phones to the sleek handheld multi-media devices on which we today rely in order to conduct a whole range of activities, including more and more digital communication.

This means that today we no longer need to wait until we get to the office, internet café, or open our laptop to access and interact through the internet.

There is no doubt that social media has emerged to be one of the most important innovations of the digital revolution and the fact that already more of the global population has a social media account rather than an email account clearly demonstrates the importance of this means of communication.

No doubt much of the success of social media is the ability to richly communicate within a community sharing experiences thoughts and ideas, along with the option to decide who and what to follow, and this phenomena is flowing across the increasingly blurred division between home and work.

Here at Plastribution we have thought long and hard about our social media strategy. We looked carefully at what others were doing and discussed how 'going social' would fit within our current marketing strategy and, importantly, whether this important step forward would contribute towards business development, including increasing sales. With this research and accompanying nail biting complete and with feet firmly

planted on the floor, we went live with a Twitter account earlier this year (@plastribution) and a month later, added a blog to our website at www.plastribution.co.uk/blog.

A few months later and given the odd hiccup or two, the ship remains on course. We can't report that we have amassed an army of Twitter 'followers' just yet, or even that our blogs have been read and disseminated widely. However when we tweet relevant industry news that we know will be of interest across the industry and the tweet gets RT'd to thousands of our followers' followers, we then appreciate how powerful social media interaction can be (thanks to @pentagonPIM, @PlastikCity_UK, @BritishPlastics, @prwnews & @sallylbailey to name but a few!).

So yes, scoring some social brownie points has been a useful exercise for Plastribution and one which will undoubtedly be of benefit and pay dividends in the long run. Please don't forget we are equally happy to telephone, email or meet face to face! 🍪



Glad when it's all over?

Have exhibitions had their day?



For businesses planning their annual marketing commitments, participation at key exhibitions has always been seen as an important and necessary activity, albeit often with a heavy financial outlay.

In their basic form, exhibitions provide the opportunity for management teams to meet and greet both customers past and present, and engage with visitors in the hope of generating leads and securing new business.

It's also a time for those on stand to socialise, enjoy a few beers at the end of the day and discuss the cut and thrust of the day's activities.

For some businesses, exhibitions are sacrosanct - considered to be far more profitable than long drawn out PR campaigns, or investment in new fangled digital marketing techniques that may or may not work. In short, for some, exhibitions are where it's at: customer facing, and what works best.

Of course in competing alongside those 'long drawn out PR campaigns' and more so, 'new fangled digital marketing techniques', there is more expectation for exhibitions

to deliver. Marketing is more transparent now than ever and with increasing opportunities to engage with prospects through social media channels and internet marketing, most businesses are spoilt for choice in how they connect with their audiences.

Not so long ago, before marketers had grasped the many advantages of internet marketing and websites were still a novelty, exhibitions really provided the only opportunity businesses had to collectively show-off their products and introduce prospects to their services. These days potential customers are able to carefully examine all aspects of a supplier's offering before opting to do business; so in this respect, yes, exhibitions really are under pressure to deliver.

If you think about it, the average exhibition format hasn't changed much over the years, other than a hike in stand rates, design and build



The UK's leading distributor of plastics raw materials

plastribution
let's make it work.

and associated costs - the cost of a plug socket always creating disbelief! With online marketing, sponsorship opportunities, keynote speeches, learnshops, dragon's den events and VIP lounges, exhibitions are still big business, but not unlike the lottery, you have to be in it to have a chance of achieving some success.

The fear factor of not exhibiting is potentially a major reason why many businesses put themselves under pressure to have a stand at shows, spending a large chunk of their marketing budget in the process and, at the end of the day, having very little to show for it.

Surely there's no point in planning and booking an exhibition stand if there was no hope of it delivering a return on investment (ROI), or is there? Ok hands up...who has booked an exhibition stand in the past knowing that just covering the cost of the stand from any new business gains would be highly unlikely?

Whatever the reason for exhibiting, the reality is that achieving any sort of quantifiable business gains is still reliant on many factors and success certainly isn't guaranteed.

So have exhibitions had their day? Can the money be put to better use elsewhere? At Plastribution we continue to see a value in certain exhibitions, not least in providing an vehicle to participate in some hard networking and, in that context, valuable opportunities are there for the taking. Clearly as an exhibitor and not unlike any other business, we freely admit that we often struggle to see the payback of exhibitions and routinely question our participation. Yes the networking is good, but if that's all we get out of show, then exhibitions really are questionable.

It seems therefore that getting the mix right and being able to 'deliver' a return of sorts seems harder than ever. Maybe, again not unlike any other business, we set our sights too high

and expect a consistent flurry of sales leads from 'day 1' until the last day - the reality is invariably very different.

One thing for sure and like any other communication vehicle, success at exhibitions is wholly reliant on the work that is put in before, during and after. If an exhibition doesn't work, it doesn't work big-time, and that's a lot of money to throw away. It's all down to the planning - and then being really motivated, inspired and people-engaging on the day, all day.

See you all at Interplas 2017! 

“Ok hands up...who has booked an exhibition stand in the past knowing that just covering the cost of the stand from any new business gains would be highly unlikely?”

The Plastribution Blog



The Plastribution blog (www.plastribution.co.uk/blog) was launched earlier in the year. Our initial aim was to provide views and opinion, insights into 'our world' and a focus on all things topical and relevant across the industry.

Along with our regular Twitter feed (@plastribution) both channels are proving successful and complement our marketing impetus. We have ongoing plans for the future development of our social media strategy and will keep you posted on these.

In the meantime please keep 'current' with our posts and if you have feedback, please get in touch. It goes without saying that despite the onset of our digital engagement, don't forget we are equally happy to telephone, email or meet face to face.

If you are new to the Plastribution blog, here is a sample of posts to whet the appetite.

Chi Mei the world's largest producer of ABS have recently launched a new grade of ABS PA757H.

Chi Mei the world's largest producer of ABS have recently launched a new grade of ABS PA757H. It demonstrates a 30% increase in MFR compared to standard PA757 and a 20% increase in impact strength. These property characteristics

mean that thinner more complex parts can be moulded without sacrificing impact strength. Larger moulded parts that may be exhibiting warping/shrinkage issues may benefit from a high flow grade whilst maintaining its impact properties.

PA757H also demonstrates marked improvement in paint adhesion and this combined with easy flow opens up new cap and closure applications.

Plastribution are now holding stock of this grade. Please contact us on 01530 560560 for further information



Design for manufacture.

Plastic components form a huge part of the world we live in. Everything from the cars we drive to work in, to the treatment we receive in hospital involve them in some way.

This is why Plastribution believe that the design of a component is critical in making sure the products we are surrounded with are produced in the best possible way.

A huge amount of us now have access to wonderful technologies such as 3d CAD packages but does that mean we know how to design for manufacture?

All too often the situation arises that we find out an issue with our design from the toolmaker or processor who is trying to make our parts and experiencing issues. So, what can we do to reduce the risk of failure?

Understanding the process of manufacture is a huge step. Do we really understand how our part will be made, and for moulded parts can we confidently say that we understand the mould layout?

Once we have our heads around this, do we really understand how the functional design of the parts is going to impact on our cosmetic requirements and in turn what material will give us the results we are looking for?

What are draft angles and where do I put fillets? A potential minefield if you haven't seen it all go wrong before! A huge part of product development comes from learning from what didn't work last time and incorporating that into our next idea.

At Plastribution, we are on hand to help with design for manufacturing – so, whether it is a discussion about the right material for the job, understating tool layout, choosing a prototyping process or getting your head around the jargon associated with part design, contact our technical team at technical@plastribution.co.uk or on 01530 561966



What is an 'independent distributor' and can they really offer better pricing and service?

Like many people, I read the words 'independent distributor' alongside the claim that they could offer 'better pricing and service' and take that to be a good thing. Really? On closer examination this looks more like a clever bit of spin rather than a substantial claim.

In writing this blog's headline, I thought about the use of the word 'independence' in the context of polymer distribution; its use suggests that the distributor was free of external influence or control. Plastribution would claim that it is free of external influence or control in the way that it interacts with its stakeholders; but there again those stakeholders are incredibly supportive and well resourced.

If asked, I am not entirely sure I could answer if our business were dependent or independent, unless I knew more about the context of the question.

With regard to better pricing and service, the suggestion is that having many casual acquaintances rather than few well-chosen suppliers is good thing. I again think that such claims may be difficult to substantiate. It has long since been Plastribution's policy that in order to make our customers competitive in their market place,

we must offer value of which service, reliability and price are key elements.

Of course these claims are substantiated by both our market leading position in the UK, and also the quantified results of our latest customer satisfaction survey.

Furthermore the close partnership we have with our suppliers is helping to ensure that our customers are continuing to receive reasonable volumes of material in these very challenging circumstances and, most importantly, both market and transaction specific information is being delivered in a timely manner.



Richard Cudd
Technical Executive – Direct Sales

Metallocene - it's not all about downgauging!

Metallocene grades of polyethylene for film extrusion have been around for 20 years or so but there is still some resistance to their use based on the premium these materials typically attract and the focus on using them to reduce film thickness.

Having worked at the 'sharp end' of film extrusion myself, I understand that many end-users purchase polyethylene film by weight therefore downgauging doesn't necessarily make sense for the extruder – the same quantity of raw material is still needed to produce the weight of film ordered! Where film is sold by the metre or piece (a bottom-welded bag or perforated sheet-on-the-reel for example) then downgauging can make sense, although a discussion is probably needed with the end-user to share the benefits of offering a thinner product with the same strength, a key attribute of metallocene.

But there are other benefits to using metallocenes such as stronger seals in converted polyethylene bags or sacks. At the same seal conditions, hot tack strength can be increased which allows faster packing on Form, Fill & Seal (FFS) lines or sealing bar temperatures can be reduced to save energy costs. Optical properties of metallocenes are also typically much better than standard grades of LLDPE with an almost PP-like clarity & gloss achievable with the right formulation. In addition, ExxonMobil's new generation of Enable grades can be used as a one-shot resin to replace LDPE/LLDPE blends.

Plastribution can offer both Exceed & Enable grades of metallocene from ExxonMobil. If you would like technical advice on exploiting the full potential of these products please contact your local Plastribution representative.

Quality management. The rocky road to continuous improvement and achieving customer satisfaction.

Looking back at the results of our December 2014 customer survey, it raised the question of how to achieve those small improvements in our processes which have the potential to make big differences to customers?

It dawned on us that many of the techniques already in place at Plastribution are drawn from the well documented philosophy of 'kaizen'. This Japanese philosophy of 'change for the better' has been adopted in many businesses. It is based on the philosophical belief that everything can be improved. When applied to quality management systems, kaizen looks to challenge the status quo, and to examine everyday business processes with the belief that small often imperceptible changes, can add up to substantial changes over the longer term.

The kaizen approach is a philosophy with no direct instructions on how to apply the beliefs to particular businesses. The approach can be found in many different process improvement methods ranging from Total Quality Management (TQM), Quality Circles and employees suggestions. The key to success is that improvements are suggested by the people doing the work.

So, what techniques do we use?
We have a 3 pronged approach.

-  Continuous improvement projects – these projects examine a specific area of the business which has been flagged for process review. Small teams look at a particular process with the hope to recommend areas for refinement/improvement. Continuous Improvement... by Everybody! Everyday! Everywhere!

-  Process model meetings – regular meetings attended by managers and team supervisors which champion the principle of the 'perfect order'. These meetings look to check all our internal processes in order to ensure smooth transactions. Good processes bring good results.

-  Suggestion box – accessible to all and a very visible means of letting people know that their input is valued. Perhaps not the most scientific method of achieving improvements but you never quite know what someone might come up with!

Does any of this work? We'll let you know after the 2015 survey results are checked! 



Sally Woodhall
Operations Supervisor



Supply chain solutions & value-added services

The current issues affecting polymer supply have impacted most acutely on UK polymer processors who buy full truckload or tanker deliveries of their key raw materials. In addition to the significant impact of the severe price volatility many processors are struggling to secure sufficient polymer to keep their plants running.

In recent years the involvement of Plastribution with larger processors where typically the material is collected from the polymer producer and delivered directly to customers in either tanker or full loads has increased, and with this the opportunity to provide increased value to these customers through reliability and service.

As a result of the ability to finance substantial inventories and the careful selection of logistic service providers, Plastribution is now able to offer enhanced supply chain solutions for processors with larger requirements who want to ensure greater security of supply and reduce the degree of price volatility.

Additionally, we have long been aware that the situation for customers who purchase polymers in less than full truckload quantities is markedly different. By virtue of the some 3,500 tonnes of physical inventory which is directly under our control, and where appropriate customer specific inventory is allocated, Plastribution can provide peace of mind both in terms of availability and price.

As part of the philosophy of 'delivering the services that are important to you', please contact our customer services team to discuss your particular requirements. You might just find that premium for service and reliability is less than you think. Please contact Plastribution on +44 (0)1530 560560. 





Busy days for Plastribution's technical team



Established to offer a complete service package, providing extended technical guidance and advice to customers throughout the manufacturing process, Plastribution's technical team has recently expanded to meet demand.

Dealing with up to 200 interactions monthly from both customers and OEMs, the team is busier than ever providing support on issues ranging from material selection to regulatory compliance and everything in between.

"It all helps to reinforce the supplier-distributor-customer relationship," says Dan Jarvis, Plastribution's Technical Manager. "By offering sound technical advice across a number of areas, covering the initial design through to the end of the manufacturing process, we are helping the complete supply chain make the right choices."

Plastribution's technical support covers a wide range of services including, but not limited to:

Regulatory and Compliance

The monitoring and supply of all relevant documentation for regulatory issues including, but not limited to: REACH, RoHS, MSDS, WEEE, WRAS, food contact, medical compliance, California 65 proposition and conflict minerals. Plastribution can also advise businesses of their obligations regarding these issues.

Efficiency

Plastribution is able to help with choosing the right products and additives to improve cycle time and energy efficiency. Alongside industry partners, we can also advise on process/machine optimisation to get the best cycle time without sacrificing component quality.

Material Choices

Material selection is critical to product performance. Plastribution's breadth of experience means that we can provide advice on the best material for the job, as well as assisting businesses to meet their ongoing requirements, such as physical performance, cost, design and regulatory constraints.

Processing Advice

With carefully selected industry partners, Plastribution can help choose the right machine type and size, as well as tooling, ancillaries, storage and handling equipment.



Idea to Component

From an initial sketch to production components, Plastribution can help make ideas a reality by providing advice on the correct material, design considerations, manufacturing methods, project costs, prototype tooling and finished component manufacture.

Troubleshooting

If you are having issues with components, whether they are

visual defects, physical defects, processing issues, drying and handling issues, practical advice can be given on the best methods to eradicate the problems by process or material improvements.

Training and Development

Plastribution is proactive in the provision of training to the industry, covering polymer basics, process optimisation and the economics of the polymer supply chain.

Re-shoring

The company is well equipped to support OEMs who wish to transfer manufacturing of plastic components, assemblies and sub-assemblies back to the United Kingdom. This includes technical support and assistance with supply chain management ensuring smooth repatriation of your manufacturing.

The Technical Team consists of:



Dan Jarvis

Dan oversees both the technical and regulatory offering across the entire sales force. While studying Polymer Science at university, he spent time working in polymer R&D, the compounding and masterbatch industry, and the packaging industry. Dan is very much customer facing but equally acts as support for our internal sales force.



Phil Little

Phil's role is to support any technical questions and advise on material/design related issues. Prior to joining the team, Phil was involved in rapid prototype and low volume moulding projects, supporting a high volume of customers with anything from material support through to how to resolve design issues and design for mouldability.



Beth Elliott

Beth's role is to support Dan and Phil in the running of the technical department, but is also responsible for requesting regulatory statements as and when needed and to ensure that they are up to date (REACh, RoHS, food etc.).

Contact the Technical Team on 01530 561966 or email technical@plastribution.co.uk.

Metal replacement

Meeting the automotive industry's need for lightweight materials and metal replacement.

Whilst the manufacturing benefits of using plastics over metals have long been recognised, the technical capabilities of products have not been able to match environmental demands.

With weight reduction, performance enhancement and cost reduction all major drivers in today's markets, particularly the automotive sector, metal replacement has never been so high a priority. Engine downsizing and fuel efficiency, reduced under bonnet space and longer vehicle life time requirements are providing increasing demands on existing and historically acceptable solutions to part designs.

However, Plastribution's portfolio has been built with not only straight metal replacement in mind. With its very high modulus, high temperature resistance and ultra-low fogging properties as examples, another key target area is performance enhancement of products already produced in polymers.

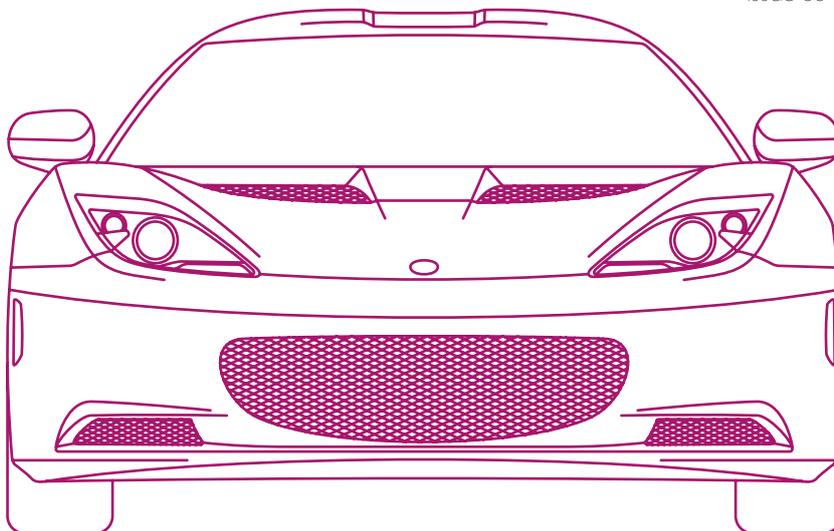
Peter Tillin, Engineering Product Manager at Plastribution said "We have worked tirelessly to ensure we are able to offer a comprehensive range of materials to cover most applications. We feel that, with

our current product range of high end engineering polymers from the industry's leading producers, we are able to offer realistic and workable solutions to most metal replacement issues."

XAREC SPS: Syndiotactic Polystyrene from Idemitsu

Developed by Idemitsu, XAREC, with a melting point of 270°C, demonstrates an exceptional level of high heat resistance and is therefore suitable for many lead free soldering applications. Also, thanks to its low density, it can represent a part weight saving against other high temperature plastics such as PPS.

Parts made in XAREC offer excellent resistance to a wide range of chemicals and oils including automotive under bonnet fluids, and show a very high hydrolytic stability, low water absorption (0.01%) coupled with excellent electrical properties. It is easy flowing and shows high



weld stability even at elevated temperatures in water and glycol.

This blend of properties makes XAREC an ideal choice for today's modern high temperature and pressure engine environments including, amongst others, control units, housings, fuse links, lamp sockets, connectors (including PCBs), antennas and high voltage parts.

Radilon: Specialist nylon grades from Radici

Based in Italy, Radici Group are one of the world's largest producers of nylon, and they are the only fully backwards integrated producer of both PA 6 and PA 66. This integration allows them the scope and diversity to be the world's most dynamic and inventive producer of nylon resins with several new developments targeted at high end engineering plastic applications for metal replacement and automotive environments.

Radilon A RV500RW and Radilon S URV: High glass fibre and high flow nylon

Radici Group's highly filled range of nylons offer higher stiffness, deformation at break, weld line strength and impact resistance when compared with standard grades of PA 66 50% GF.

These enhanced product families also have comparable tensile strength at break compared with light metal alloys and demonstrate much better fatigue behaviour. These product benefits come at a lower density than light metal alloys, allowing for performance increases at a reduced part weight, so aiding fuel efficiencies.

The ease of processing these resins means that higher productivities can be achieved, along with improving properties of weld line resistance and the unique balance of properties makes it the ideal choice for metal replacement where impact strength

and vibration resistance are key factors - such areas include engine mountings, oil pans and seat frames.

Radilon HHR PA 66 for high temperature applications

Radilon HHR has been developed for blow moulding and injection moulding applications to produce, at a continuous operation of 210°C in air, the best performing material in its class.

Due to the original heat protection technology employed by Radici group in their HHR resins, a high retention of tensile strength and impact properties after heat ageing at 210°C means these grades are aimed at areas of metal replacement and property improvement. They can also often replace special polymers such as PPA, PPS and PA 4,6.

Typical applications include charge air coolers, resonators and turbo air ducts.

Radilon D: Eco sustainable PA6.10

Underlining their commitment to environmental concerns, Radici Group are proud to have developed Radilon D, a new family of PA6.10 engineering plastics for injection and extrusion moulding, produced in part using polymer from renewable sources. Compared to petroleum-based products, these materials can not only reduce dependency on fossil resources but also lower greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption in production processes.

Radilon D materials show reduced moisture uptake and a smaller loss of tensile strength and tensile modulus under wet conditions. Furthermore, PA6.10 products have better chemical resistance in contact with zinc chloride and calcium chloride solutions and better glycol resistance. Compared to PA11 and PA12, the new Radilon® D products have improved thermal resistance and reduced hydrocarbon permeability. Typical applications include injection moulded components, vapour, fuel and brake lines, pneumatic pipes, connectors, high stiffness parts, pipe fittings and monofilaments.

Radistrong® - Long Fibres (new range of polyamides)

Compared to PA short fibres, Radici Group's launch of Radistrong® LF offer a range of advantages across a broad spectrum of applications. These include:

- Enhanced impact properties
- Improved tensile strength at break at high temperature
- Improved creep and fatigue resistance Lower parts warpage

- Better performance at high temperatures

Typical products include seat frames, crash absorbers, structural parts and engine housings.

Pre-Elec and PRESEAL: Conductive polymer solutions from Premix OY

Vaporised fuel and air mix together to form an explosive atmosphere and in order to make environments safe all ignition sources must be removed, including static electricity. The best way to control electrostatic build-up in fuel systems is to use conductive plastic materials in direct contact with the fuels.

Premix are the industry leaders on providing solutions to the automotive industry in fuel lines. They offer a unique range of products for both extrusion blow moulding and injection moulding applications, providing significant cost savings in the overall fuel system. As the materials have a constant electrical conductivity over time, safety is assured.

Typical properties include excellent processability and weldability providing lower production costs. Since the products are high gloss with very smooth surfaces, less fuel turbulence is encountered through the systems. The products are suitable for mono-layer and multi-layer systems and are also bio-fuel compatible.

Iupital LF Series: Low formaldehyde emission acetal for excellent antifogging properties

Mitsubishi Engineering Plastics have further enhanced their acetal (POM) range with the development of a

low formaldehyde emission grade to combat anti-fogging issues and chemical irritation that can be encountered with standard grades. This is achieved with no reduction in properties from standard acetal.

In routine automotive emission tests, standard acetal emitted approximately 14 times the amount of formaldehyde compared to the Iupital LF series.

This makes it ideal for products used in vehicle interiors and confined spaces, or general acetal mouldings where residual smell from, for example, storage in sealed bags, is an issue.

Typical products include clips, seat belt guides and trim parts.

PPS: Polyphenylene Sulphide for high temperature and stiffness applications

PPS is a unique material which offers excellent resistance to high temperatures, coupled with flame retardancy and excellent electrical properties. This blend of properties makes PPS suitable as both a metal replacement and a thermoset material replacement.

PPS is available in Linear and Branched or Cross Linked and Elastomer Modified, with each material offering a distinct set of advantages. Grades are also available unfilled and in variety of filler loadings, and Plastribution are able to offer all.

PPS is used extensively in the automotive sector and is currently found in alternator parts, power modules, sensors, electric coils, capacitors, connectors, housings,

hot water systems, pump parts and many other applications.

Vestakeep: High performance PEEK from Evonik

Polyether ether ketone, or PEEK, is being produced by Evonik for applications where, historically, the use of plastics struggled due to extremes in environment. VESTAKEEP grades demonstrate particularly high rigidity and strength, and with Vicat softening temperatures of over 300°C, this is coupled with exceptional resistance to high temperatures. Also of note is VESTAKEEP's very low water absorption, giving the benefit of a very high dimensional stability. Other properties include excellent chemical resistance, electrical properties and hydrolytic stability. This balance in properties makes VESTAKEEP an ideal metal replacement material.

VESTAKEEP offers, with both unfilled and filled grades for processing by injection and extrusion, one of the most diverse ranges on the market, enabling its use in a number of high performance environments.

Typical applications for VESTAKEEP include gears, high rigidity machinery parts, housings, bearings and self-lubricating parts. These can generally be found in the medical, film, sheet, cable, automotive and aero industries.

Thermofil HP: High performance glass filled Polypropylene

Thanks to Sumika's unique processing technology, Thermofil HP grades are able to offer performances not previously achievable in glass filled polypropylene (GF PP). This, along

with their improved glass coupling methods, results in significantly higher tensile strength, tensile modulus, elongation at break, creep resistance, impact resistance and heat distortion temperature when compared with equivalent standard GF PP.

The properties are such improved that the products are finding their way to replace glass filled nylon (GF PA) applications, where their use offers higher tensile strength and tensile modulus. When considering the much lower density of Thermofil compared to GF PA, significant cost savings can also be achieved - this unique blend of excellent stiffness, creep resistance and impact resistance has enabled Thermofil to replace both metals and higher end engineering plastics in a variety of applications, including engine cooling fans, shrouds, manifolds, internal automotive door parts, pedals and housings.

Evonik : Plexiglas replaces metal for enhanced surface finish.

Evonik Industries are the global leader in Acrylic (PMMA) materials, offering a diverse range of speciality PMMA materials for use in the Automotive and Electronics industries.

Plexiglas Hi-Gloss NTA-1 offers an excellent surface finish and a very high level of black gloss (class A) surface finish. It also benefits from its ability to resist scratching, and, where damage occurs, its ability to be polished back to its original condition. This coupled with good impact resistance, good heat deflection temperature and its excellent mouldability has led to it being successfully used in a variety of internal and external automotive components. These

include external trim parts for Lotus and Jaguar Land Rover.

Chi Mei ABS : Enhanced finish Electroplating Grade

Taiwanese plastics producer Chi Mei has introduced a new grade of ABS (Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene) resin that is tailored to achieving high quality results with electroplating. The new material - Polylac® PA-726M - is intended for use in automotive parts and components, particularly front grilles, and is already approved for use by some automotive OEMs.

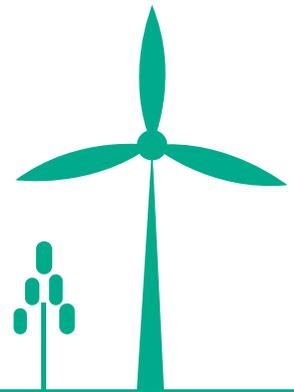
Meeting the high demands of the automotive sector

Mitsubishi Engineering Plastics' comprehensive portfolio of XANTAR polycarbonate and blends offer new opportunities for the automotive industry. The materials are predominantly used in automotive interior applications such as instrument panels. Specially-developed grades offer solutions for demanding applications such as air conditioning and venting nozzles, steering column claddings, dashboard components and interior lighting. 

“We feel that, with our current product range of high end engineering polymers from the industry's leading producers, we are able to offer realistic and workable solutions to most metal replacement issues.”

Peter Tillin
Engineering Product Manager, Plastribution

It's never been easier to go green



The need to reduce our reliance on oil and decrease waste to landfill might be driving the use of greener materials – but until the invention of Floreon their application had been fairly limited.

Have you tried bioplastics but found they don't have the durability and performance you need? Well that is about to change. Plastrubition has discovered an exciting new material called Floreon, which has the potential to transform packaging and the way we think about plastic.

Floreon is an innovative bioplastic that is much tougher and easier to process than current biomaterials. It has excellent, well-rounded performance and can be processed on existing machinery as a drop-in alternative for other plastics. One of its key strengths is that it can be tailored for each processing technique.

Thermoforming

Materials have higher crack resistance in the roll stage and final products offer improved impact resistance and retain their toughness at low temperatures.

Injection moulding

Easier to inject at lower temperatures, which saves energy and decreases the injection pressure, while creating products with improved mechanical properties.

Injection stretch blow moulding

Improved processing and enhanced toughness of the finished items.

Extrusion blow moulding

Boosted toughness with low melt flow index and high melt strength.

Film extrusion

Enhanced melt strength and elasticity, widening the processing window for PLA in an application that has been considered challenging.

Going green without losing functionality

There is a growing need for companies to visibly demonstrate their commitment to sustainability, which means we can expect an increase in demand for green packaging solutions. But we also know there can be no sacrifice in functionality to meet the green dream.

Conventional polylactic acid (PLA) is produced from sustainable plant-based feedstock, which means it has a lower carbon footprint and non-renewable energy usage than any mineral based thermoplastic.

“Bioplastics from sustainable sources deliver improved functionality and better end of life options than conventional materials.”



However, until now it has been renowned for its poor toughness and tendency to lose strength on storage in warm conditions, which means its use has been restricted to niche areas.

Floreon is a patented compound, which enhances standard PLA - creating an innovative material that delivers significant benefits over conventional PLA and oil-based plastics and has a sustainable origin and a range of end of life options.

When Bill Stringer, Floreon's Commercial Director, visited Plastrubation recently he explained that there is very little difference between the performance of bio- and oil-based plastics. In some cases he says they are even finding that bioplastics have better functional properties - for example, lower process temperatures and higher rigidity.

The future for Bioplastics is getting brighter and brighter and Floreon is helping to change people's perception of what is achievable with a greener material.

What makes Floreon different?

Floreon addresses the need for a PLA-based bioplastic suitable for manufacturing degradable and compostable articles, but with improved mechanical, physical, chemical and thermal properties. Not only does Floreon have improved toughness, higher strength and durability compared to PLA, but also it is recyclable, biodegradable and requires far less energy to process compared to rival products.

Floreon is the most versatile bioplastic available today. By taking the performance of PLA to the next level, it can be used in applications including:

- 🌱 Packaging - including clam shells
- 🌱 Thermoformed trays for food
- 🌱 Water cooler bottles
- 🌱 Plant labels
- 🌱 Key and gift cards
- 🌱 Packaging film
- 🌱 Cutlery

The future is even greener

Awareness of the need to decrease the amount of landfill waste and the desire to reduce dependence on fossil resources is increasing the interest shown in bio products. By delivering advanced technical properties, which increase product attractiveness and expand the range of uses for bioplastics, strong growth in demand for these materials is expected across the globe.

"The work does not stop here," Bill told us. "Our current focus is on producing thermoformed trays for food packaging as well as a wide range of injection moulded items. We are already working on the second generation of Floreon, which should come on line this year, which will have even better heat resistance properties."

Bioplastics from sustainable sources deliver improved functionality and better end of life options than conventional materials. Floreon has the potential to transform packaging and change the way we think about plastics forever - there has never been a better time to go green. 🌱

Phthalate free

As consumers become increasingly aware of their interaction with polymer products, the chemicals used in the production of plastic are coming under greater scrutiny.

At Plastribution we are certainly listening to our customers and in this article we explain why Phthalate free polypropylene is becoming increasingly important.

Phthalates (pronounce thal-lates) are esters of phthalic acid and are sometimes called phthalic esters. They are made by reacting phthalic anhydride with alcohol or alcohols. They are mainly used as a plasticizer to soften PVC but are also used in a wide range of products such as personal care items (perfume, make up, hair spray etc) as well as medical devices (in particular tubing) detergents, packaging, toys, paints and glues.

Phthalates have been scrutinised recently as they are easily released into the environment and are widely believed to be endocrine disruptors. In too high a concentration they can damage the sexual development of children and have been linked to male infertility.

Some studies have also linked them to breast cancer, diabetes, asthma and obesity. They can be found in

the air that we breathe and can leach out of the products that they are used in and into our bodies.

Some legislation restricts the use of some phthalates – 4 are listed as a substance of very high concern (SVHC) under REACH because they are classed as toxic for reproduction.

Under REACH they cannot be used in concentrations of above 0.1% in any finished part that is made. Some phthalates are banned in cosmetics in the EU and 6 are banned or restricted in the EU for use in toys.

So how is polypropylene affected? Whilst phthalates are not intentionally added into polypropylene, phthalates can be found in 5th generation Ziegler Natta polypropylene catalysts. Traces of these phthalates can sometimes be left in the polypropylene in very small amounts – well below the level demanded by REACH.

It is important to know that these traces are tiny – less than one part per million and sometimes not even detectable in lab testing – and propylene is classed as food safe in the EU and with the FDA. However, because of the concerns about phthalates some end users are demanding phthalate free polypropylene, especially for baby and children's products. 6th generation Ziegler Natta catalysts don't use phthalates which guarantees that the polypropylene that is made by them is phthalate free.

Not all manufacturers have plans to switch to phthalate free polypropylene as the risk factors associated with the traces are minimal but all are watching the market closely. Ducor are introducing DuPure for homo and copolymers and DuClear for random copolymers which will

replace their existing grade range by the end of quarter 3 this year.

Total are also working on a range of phthalate free grades which should be available by the end of the year and Carmel will be switching to phthalate free grades with no name changes.

If you have any questions regarding this article then please do not hesitate to contact the Technical Team on 01530 561966 or E-mail technical@plastribution.co.uk or alternatively speak to your sales representative. 

Good relationships with Exxonmobil Chemical extend to supplying Santoprene™ TPV

Back in February this year, we announced that ExxonMobil Chemical had appointed Plastrubion as an official distributor of Santoprene™ thermoplastic vulcanizates (TPVs) in the UK.

In our haste to tweet this good news, having only recently set up a Twitter account, we 'implied' that we were appointed as the sole distributors of Santoprene™ as opposed to being an official distributor - for clarity purposes, we set the record straight and tweeted a correction and an apology. Lesson learnt!

That incident behind us, this important agreement means that we will be able to supply the industry with a wide range of Santoprene™ TPV grades available from stock - from standard natural and black products through to more specialised high flow, UV stabilised and low fogging products that are FDA and NSF approved. The appointment extends the range of high-performance polymers from ExxonMobil Chemical available from Plastrubion.

Engineered to perform

Santoprene™ TPVs have proven to be dependable polymers with cross-linked EPDM properties for flexible engineered parts that require long-term performance.

Consistently delivering excellent performance - such as durability, improved surface aspects and smooth window operability - for automotive and demanding industrial applications, Santoprene™ TPVs have become the global standard for engineered TPVs.

Compared to alternative materials such as thermoset rubber, Santoprene™ TPVs offer manufacturing flexibility, ease of processing, the potential for reduced system costs, and the possibility of sustainability benefits.

Key to their strength is ExxonMobil Chemical's on-going commitment to the TPV industry. With more than 30 years of market presence, they have been delivering advanced solutions and support services that help customers manufacture high-performance products.

To find out how Santoprene™ TPVs can help solve your application challenges, contact Plastrubion on +44 (0)1530 560560. 

“ Compared to alternative materials such as thermoset rubber, Santoprene™ TPVs offer manufacturing flexibility, ease of processing, the potential for reduced system costs, and the possibility of sustainability benefits. ”

ExxonMobil
Chemical



Ecomass Technologies

High density materials specialists

Plastic performing like metals is not new but the technology of making it feel and look like metal is a fast developing market. Ecomass Technologies has amassed a wealth of experience in this area and Plastribution is proud to work with them in the UK.

Ecomass Technologies specialises in formulating, developing and producing high density thermoplastic composite materials designed to replace metallic materials. These materials provide the density – up to 11 g/cc – and many of the physical properties of metallic materials along with the production and economic advantages of injection or compression moulding on conventional processing equipment.

The Ecomass process begins by selecting the optimal base resin, as determined by such factors as operating temperature, chemical compatibility, and desired physical properties. Metal powder weighting agents such as stainless steel, copper, or tungsten are then added to the base resin to produce a composite material at the desired density.

The Ecomass Compound product line consists of a number of standard thermoplastic base resins such as HDPE, TPU, PA6, PA6/6, PA12, PEBA, PPA, PPS, PEEK, and more, all of which can be formulated from 1 to 11 g/cc. Moreover, Ecomass Compounds meet the EU RoHS Directive, are

non-toxic, and completely lead free, helping customers stay ahead of the regulatory curve of the international marketplace.

There are four primary application areas in which Ecomass Compounds excel: 1) Weighting; 2) Balancing; 3) Radiation Shielding; and 4) Vibration Dampening. Industries served include automotive, defence, industrial, medical, nuclear, sporting goods, houseware goods, and more. For example, Ecomass Compounds are utilised as golf club shaft weights, which improve performance by adding weight and balance to the club and by reducing vibration transmitted through the shaft during ball-striking.

For Radiation Shielding applications, Ecomass Compounds are utilised as lead-free shielding solutions for X-ray Fluorescent Analyzers, X-ray tube housings and handheld dental X-ray devices.

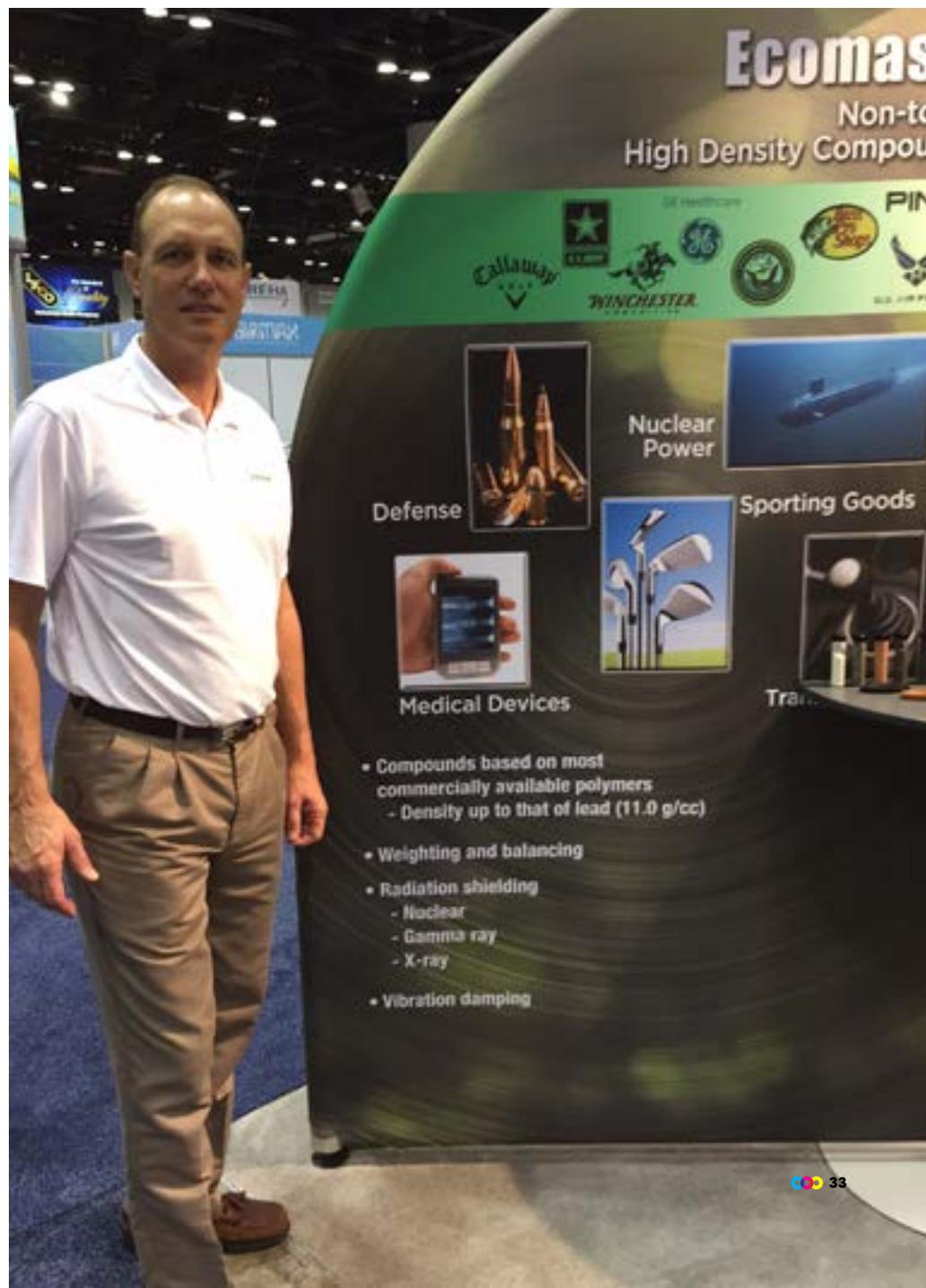
Post-moulding, parts made from Ecomass Compounds are easily machinable and can be painted, powder-coated and PVD-coated



to achieve a wide variety of surface finishes. Our newest PVD-coated samples (see photo), for example, achieve a mirror finish, delivering the look as well as the feel of metal parts. This surface finish applied to parts made from Ecomass' high density materials offers exciting potential for plumbing fixtures and houseware goods applications.

More information on Ecomass Compounds can be found at www.ecomass.com. 

If you have any questions about Ecomass Technologies or any of their high density thermoplastic composite materials, please contact Plastrubion on +44 (0)1530 560560.



- Compounds based on most commercially available polymers
 - Density up to that of lead (11.0 g/cc)
- Weighting and balancing
- Radiation shielding
 - Nuclear
 - Gamma ray
 - X-ray
- Vibration damping

APIGO BIO

A family of olefin (TPO) based compounds containing raw materials from renewable sources with a content ranging from 20% up to 90%.

A quality supplier of thermoplastic elastomers has for a long time been an important component in the material portfolio of a polymer distributor. APIGO BIO is a product that offers technical and environmental benefits and extends an already comprehensive range.

Here is some useful information on API Spa and their product APIGO BIO.

API Spa is a historic company in the field of soft thermoplastic compounds, and for several years has been actively engaged in research and development in the field of bioplastics. API Spa are proud to announce the introduction of APIGO BIO, a new family of olefin (TPO) based compounds containing raw materials from renewable sources.

In recent years API has recognised and successfully interpreted the increasing environmental awareness through cultural change, generating high-sustainability solutions and products.

Bio & Beyond represents a further step along API's journey from the development of the first APINAT biodegradable polymers to offering a complete range of polymers and compounds with a high content of renewability. With the aim of providing solutions in line with a market that is becoming increasingly sensitive to

the eco-sustainability of products, API is committed to developing a wide range of biomaterials able to reproduce their current full range of products in a bio-based version.

APIGO BIO has a content of renewable source ranging from 20% up to 90%, which results in a benefit measured by the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) in accordance with the ISO 14040-14044 standards - a method that analyses the environmental impact of a product throughout its entire life cycle, from the selection of raw materials to its final end disposal.

As these products are based on raw materials from renewable sources and vegetable crops, they contribute not only to the reduction of CO2 emissions and greenhouse gases thereby saving fossil resources, but also to a more efficient use of agricultural resources and consequently to the development of rural and economically depressed areas that are not suitable for the production of food crops.



apigo. BIO

APIGO BIO is a wide family of compounds
a clear plastic (TPU) container makes
it easy to handle

APIGO BIO is a family of clear based
compounds (TPU) containing raw materials
from renewable sources

APi is an active member of
**European
bioplastics**
www.european-bioplastics.org

APIGO BIO compounds show physical and mechanical properties comparable to conventional TPOs derived from fossil fuels.

Available in hardnesses ranging from 70 ShA to 66 ShD they can be processed using the traditional technologies of injection moulding, extrusion, extrusion-blow moulding and overmoulding and are available in various grades suitable for contact with food, in accordance with the European 10/2011/EC standard and/or American FDA regulations.

The APIGO BIO family of compounds easily adapt to different fields of application including personal care, building, packaging, furnishing and automotive, thanks to the wide range of formulations possible.

APIGO BIO represents a further move forward in APi's 'Bio & Beyond' strategy aimed at the world of Bioplastics.

And so the APIGO BIO joins APi's already extensive range of bioplastics, which includes the APINAT

compounds of 100% biodegradable materials and APILON 52 BIO from renewable TPU based sources.

If you have any questions about APIGO BIO or any of the API range of thermoplastic elastomers please contact Plastrubion on +44 (0)1530 560560

Plastics Industry Awards

Friday 9 October 2015



The Plastics Industry Awards have firmly established themselves as the forum for recognising and rewarding excellence in an increasingly competitive market.

Launched in 2001, and held annually in London this event is dedicated to rewarding innovation and exceptional performance. The Plastics Industry Awards acknowledge the best companies and the best people in the market.

For this year's awards, Plastribution has submitted 3 strong entries. Here's a taster of each:

01_PPH Butterfly

Plastribution provides vital support to develop a novel medical device that will significantly reduce death through childbirth complications in developing countries.

This particular story has significance in a number of ways, not least in that it concerns the development of a product that has the potential to save many lives.

In essence, Plastribution were approached in May/June 2014

about a medical product that an injection moulding customer was being asked to quote on and was struggling with material selection. The enquiry was passed to Plastribution's technical team who offered to work directly with the end customer in a support role.

The medical product in question is a life-saving device which is known as the PPH Butterfly - a rigid piece of apparatus that can be used internally to treat utero-vaginal prolapse, or in simple terms, to stop women bleeding to death in obstetric emergencies following childbirth (Postpartum haemorrhage - PPH).

This entry promotes Plastribution's unique and pivotal role not only as a supplier of material, but also in a supporting capacity in the development of the device. The role includes material selection, consultation with the research unit, the final production partner and both production and prototype tool manufacturers.

NHS
*National Institute for
Health Research*



02_Griplt Fixings

Plastribution provides Dragon's Den entrepreneur with production know how & technical expertise.

In August 2014, 19 year-old Jordan Daykin became the youngest ever entrepreneur to win investment on Dragon's Den, securing £80,000 investment from hard-to-please Deborah Meaden, in return for a 25% stake in his company Griplt Fixings.

Griplt Fixings are a revolutionary new design of universal fixing designed for use with all types of plasterboard installation. Deborah proved the strength of the fixings by sitting in a chair suspended by chains from a number of Griplt Fixings in a plasterboard wall.

Following investment in injection moulding machinery in order to bring production of their products in-house, Griplt Fixings chose Plastribution as a materials supply partner.

"The service that Plastribution offers is not unique, but having them as trusted advisors taking care of these things so efficiently, and at a critical time for Griplt was excellent," said Simon Wiper, Production Manager. "And with new products in the pipeline, having Plastribution's extensive materials portfolio to hand is a real benefit."

Helping Griplt Fixings through the early stages of in-house production

is only part of the story. As a trusted advisor, Plastribution also provided technical and supply chain advice, assistance with training support, surety of material supply and price stability - all proactive measures designed to support a fast developing fledgling business.





As always, we are keen to receive feedback on all our courses.

These are comments from delegates at the inaugural course held in April 2015:

03_Plastrubution training

A decade of investing in the industry.

Over the last 8 years nearly 400 candidates from approximately 100 different companies have attended Plastrubution's popular training courses.

The sharing of its technical 'know-how' is a fundamental element of Plastrubution's commitment to service excellence and this is reflected in the training courses available and the depth of the content covered. Aimed at advancing the knowledge and skills of its customers' process technicians and production, commercial and supply chain management, the courses are free and very well received.

In training hundreds of plastics professionals, this entry promotes Plastrubution's unstinting contribution to the industry over the years and explains what each course covers and aims to achieve. As with any training submission, the entry is supported by some glowing testimonials.

“Hi Duncan, the course was excellent and obviously well timed with everything that is currently going on in the European market (although I realise that wasn't actually planned)

The content was well balanced – pitched at a level suited to those who work in the plastics industry but don't have a chemical background. The notes provide a useful reference document to go back to.

Although you are not a training company, it is this extra technical support that make Plastrubution my first point of contact when we are developing new products or need new materials.

I receive the Price Know-How document already, which I find very useful (particularly for giving info to our sales team for discussions with customers) and I would be very interested in your quarterly market reviews.

Thanks for running the course and inviting me to it. ”

“Hi Duncan, all very informative thanks, I didn't lose concentration once, so many thanks for presenting the content so clearly.

Please put my name on the list for the quarterly market review, I look forward to the first edition at the end of July. ”

Reflections on 2 years as BPF President

It was over three years ago that I received a telephone call from Philip Watkins the then President of the BPF President asking if I was willing to stand for election to position of Vice-President.

He went on to advise me that in all likelihood that success would result in nomination for the presidency and a probable two-year term in office. I was of course delighted to receive the news, but also aware that I should both seek the approval of our shareholders' and also my wife and to quote one of our Japanese Chairman of 'Wives on the earth are always "big boss" for all husbands in the world'. I received the call from Philip on a Friday morning and by Friday afternoon Itochu gave their blessing, and that evening my wife added her support to the cause and it was 'game on'.

Soon after the nomination I was advised that subject to election I would face a particular challenge in the course of my presidency as it was the intention of Peter Davies Director General and Alan Davey Finance and Administration Director, to retire at the 2014 AGM after 16 and 10 years of service respectively and that I would preside over selecting their replacements.

In fact, at my very first BPF Council Meeting in the capacity of President held at the Bank of England in June 2013 I announced to the Council the news of Peter's and Alan's

impending retirements and the proposed process to select their replacements. An abiding memory of this particular meeting was Alan Davey passing me a note pointing out that we were running 20 minutes late at a meeting that had to finish on time so that the Deputy Governor could join us for a Q&A session.

Fortunately I got back on schedule and was mightily relieved that such a high profile meeting was a success.

I considered myself to be incredibly fortunate in both the legacy I inherited from Philip Watkins in terms of his excellent efforts to raise the profile of the industry and the plastic industry's requirements and also because the economic recovery started to get underway bringing welcome relief to a beleaguered majority of the BPF membership.

My key strategic themes included:

-  Skills and Training
-  Security of Energy Supply
-  Finance
-  The Construction sector



Inevitably progress has been mixed, however really positive progress has been made in the area of skills and training with both the establishment of the BPF's Education and Skills Committee and also the strong involvement in the Science Industry Partnership bid for greater support from Government for funding and provision of sector specific training.

Security of energy supply remains a national concern and so far the government has done little to address the increasing concerns that the gap between supply and potential demand continues to narrow, inevitably economic recovery will further close this gap. Nonetheless the BPF and other bodies continue to lobby in this regard, and hopefully the new government will take greater heed of the need for this essential resource.

The situation on finance has improved with fewer member companies expressing concern about availability or cost of finance, and the evidence from the machinery sector indicates near record level of investment.

Whilst the construction sector has lost out on some government expenditure as austerity measures take effect, the recovery in the private housing sector has come as a most welcome relief to a number of significant member companies.

As part of my presidency the BPF has taken the initiative to clarify the essential role of plastics in society and this is being achieved through a series of info-graphics, which effectively communicate why this is such an import sector of our economy.

I would very much hope that my BPF presidency would pass the 'acid test' of the federation being left in at least as good a condition as when I took the role on. Perhaps for me the greatest achievement has been to successfully oversee the 'changing of the guard, and not only am I delighted with the appointment of Philip Law as Director General and Darren Muir as Finance Director, but also the retention of the rest of the team at BPF House during this period of change.

Personally I have found the role incredibly rewarding; providing a whole host of experiences I would not otherwise have enjoyed. I have made some great friendships, and consider myself to be a very fortunate member of the past presidents club!

Whilst this is the end of my presidency it will certainly not be the end of my involvement with the BPF, I will remain an active member of the Council, Strategy and Finance Committee and of course the Distributors and Compounds Group; the route that led to me becoming the first BPF President from this sector of the industry.

Finally it leaves me to wish David Hall the new BPF President every success in his new role, and I hope that he finds the role as enjoyable and fulfilling as I have done! 🍀

Mike Boswell

The only way is...apprentices

If you have read any of our previous know-how magazines, you will have read about our apprentices - maybe this is the first time this journal has dropped on your desk. Either way we are so proud of what our apprentices have achieved that we believe it is worth talking about it again, or, if you have read know how before, keeping you up to date with their progress.

About 5 years ago we realised that we share some of the responsibility in bringing fresh faces into our industry. The polymer courses that many of us studied in places like Burton and Trowbridge are long gone and we were finding it increasingly difficult to find prospective employees who could apply their technical skills in a commercial environment.

Plastribution cannot offer apprenticeships in tool making or injection moulding, but there are a wealth of skills and experience that we can pass on to people coming into our industry. We are also offering a chance to join a successful and growing business.

Lucy was our first apprentice joining us at 18 years of age in 2010. We worked closely with Loughborough Technical College making the employment process simple and efficient. The business administration apprenticeship appealed to us and gave Lucy the chance to study a wide range of subjects including accountancy, employment law and marketing. We felt we could help Lucy with the technical aspects

of her job. Lucy and many of her colleagues have been through an induction process and a structured training program introducing them to the world of polymers.

Lucy has long since graduated her apprenticeship, and has just obtained a first class honours degree in Business Studies. She has been promoted and is now a key part of our product group supervisory team.

We did not stop there: Sarah's contribution in the Direct Sales team has been recognised with a senior role within the internal team. Kelly is working within our operations team and is taking on new responsibilities as the business continues to grow into new areas.

Abhi completed his apprenticeship and joined the Distribution Sales team; after 3 years he has now left the business - I suppose you could view this as a failure, but we don't. Abhi is a capable young man with a bright future ahead of him. He has left our business for a technical sales role outside of our industry; we wish him every success and

trust we have played a small but significant role at the start his career.

As Abhi leaves us for pastures new, Vicky joins at the start of the process. She has become our 5th apprentice and newest member of our growing team. She has already made an impression with her quiet but focused approach. It is very early days but we have no doubt that she will play a significant part in the future success of our business.

The apprenticeship system often gets associated with practical but vital skills - we need young individuals with those skills for the continued growth of our industry. We were unsure if the apprenticeship system would work for us in a non-manufacturing environment, but we can unequivocally say it has worked, and will continue to work for us in the future.

If you want to find out if the apprenticeship system could work for your business then find out more at www.gov.uk/take-on-an-apprentice, or give your local college a ring. 

Not the famous five, nor the secret seven....

no, this is Plastribution's boomerang club

Some have thought of doing it; others wouldn't contemplate it; and some have done it....only to later regret it and decide to go back. There are all sorts of people who leave a position with an organisation for greener pastures elsewhere, only to discover the pasture that they were previously grazing in ends up looking pretty good from the other side of the fence.

For those who opt for change in employment, some departures are well thought out and executed, while others don't go so well for an abundance of reasons. Whatever the circumstances, getting it wrong and having to make a successful career U-turn, usually requires more from the former employee than just a humble-pie moment.

Every business has its 'returnees' - Plastribution's 'band of brothers & sisters', who have left the business and returned is known as the Boomerang Club. A revered, mature and knowledgeable bunch, club members say that as a result of their experiences they appreciate their jobs more.

There are no rites of passage here, although for the majority who leave, the reasons for the transition back to Plastribution seems to have a common theme - that it's a great place to work!

Here is a sample of personal stories from a number of Boomerang Club members.



01

"I first joined Plastribution in 2000 at the age of 17 and began as a sales co-ordinator working with the Commodity and Styrenics departments. Before this I had been at college full-time as well as having a part-time job, and then briefly worked at a local newspaper as a receptionist.

I really enjoyed working at Plastribution as it was my first long-term job at that age and everyone made me feel very welcome and I soon felt part of the company. After a year and a half I made the decision to leave Plastribution to go and live in Cornwall; whilst living there I worked for a small insurance company.

After a year living in Cornwall I moved back to the Ashby area and started working at a business reservation company in a nearby town. I had made some good friends at Plastribution and they found out that I had moved back to the area and got in touch with me to see if I would be interested in returning.

I was very happy to be invited back to work for Plastribution in 2002 as a sales co-ordinator, and was promoted to the role of Internal Sales Representative a few years later.

After now being back at Plastribution for 13 years I still feel it was the right decision - everyone is so friendly and hardworking which makes it a great team to be a part of."

01 – Amanda Bunker
Internal Sales Representative



02

"I had been with the company for 8 years and was getting itchy feet and wanted a fresh challenge. I worked for two years at a pharmaceutical company where I gained valuable new skills and experience and then worked at Hubron International covering sales in UK and Northern Europe where I gained further valuable experience.

My personal circumstances changed and I also missed the polymer industry which is what I really enjoyed. I was offered positions from a couple of Plastribution's competitors but I could not bring myself to work for the competition and sell against the people and company that I believed in.

As it was, Plastribution approached me and made me an offer I couldn't refuse. I have now been with the company for a further 8 years and my career has gone from strength to strength.

Plastribution also continue to go from strength to strength and I am very excited to be an integral part of the journey."

02 – Martin White **Styrenic Products and** **Distribution Sales Manager**

"I joined Plastribution straight from College at 18; it was my first real full time employment experience so I had nothing else to compare it to. I was working an evening job at the same time and began to struggle working both jobs.

I ended up leaving Plastribution and seeking employment elsewhere, working different hours but again in an administration type role.



03

I was away from Plastribution for only 18 months, but quickly learnt that Plastribution's values and appreciation of its employees was not something that was "standard" amongst all businesses. As it was very much like a family at Plastribution, particularly back then as it was still a relatively small company, I really missed the closeness of my colleagues.

I soon realised I had also missed the opportunity to develop and pursue a long term career at Plastribution.

I heard there was a vacancy through a mutual friend who was working at Plastribution and approached management with my tail between my legs for an interview.

Fortunately they agreed to take me back. In the 11 years that I have been back, I have had 3 promotions.

I absolutely made the right decision and this has been confirmed to me on many occasions since my return. I feel like a valued member of the Plastribution team and am thankful to have been given a second opportunity."

03 – Dionne Wardle **Internal Sales Manager - Distribution** **Sales, Plasfilms and LJ Specialities**

My career as a technical author spanned 10 years, I then left to have my 3rd child and couldn't return due to childcare issues. I set up my own fitness business when my youngest was 6 months old and that is now in its 9th year.



04

I joined Plastribution to occupy my days when all the children were all at school full time.

A year in to my career with Plastribution an opportunity came up closer to home, substantially more than I was being paid here and had the opportunity to work from home doing what I started out my career as a technical author – a dream job! (or so it seemed on the surface). After 2 weeks of joining the new company I realised how little those ‘perks’ meant when I was unhappy with who I worked with and who I worked for.

Their work ethics were back in the dark ages and they were in the worst financial situation since starting up. So remembering how happy I was at Plastribution, the people, the way the company treated their staff, how they ran the business I knew I would be far happier back here, so within 4 weeks (the void) I was back. Unemployed for the grand total of 2 hours, Dionne and Duncan were fantastic in their support and confidence in the reasons for returning and I’ve never looked back.

Since leaving my previous company last May, I’ve heard that other key people have also left, so it was indeed the right decision!

04 – Sarah Minshaw
Internal Sales Representative

After leaving Plastribution in 1998 I still kept in touch, so was delighted to be approached after 12 years away to work again for the company. I was really impressed with how the company had grown from a small player in the plastic industry to becoming the leading distributor



05

we are today. I was working in the construction industry for a company in administration at the time of the approach, so the security and success that Plastribution had to offer, together with the opportunity to work again with many familiar faces, made the decision very easy for me to re-join Plastribution. After a further 5 years I am very pleased with how things are going and have no regrets with the decision I made to return.

05 – David Pinkney
Product Supervisor, Polyolefins

So there you have it, members of Plastribution’s Boomerang Club tell it the way it is and seem content with their lot.

Clearly there are many reasons why employees may consider approaching a previous employer with a view to returning to familiar shores. Whatever the reason, a carefully planned strategy to make sure the homecoming is a success is vital. 🇬🇧 🇮🇪

To the moon & back (twice!)

Technical Sales Executive, Peter Shakeshaft, 'arrived' at a major milestone recently by notching-up 20 years at Plastribution!

Without getting overly sentimental, he summarised his career to-date:

"In 1995 I had been working as a Project Engineer in manufacturing and it seemed like a good idea to use my technical knowledge of designing and processing plastics in a sales role.

At the time I had a much loved red Ford Capri and I remember when driving back from my interview that I was wondering if I would ever be doing this 200 mile journey back home ever again. Twenty years and 1 million miles later, I have my answer!

My first company car was a Vauxhall Cavalier with a Motorola built in car phone; how technology has moved on in that time, and I am now in my tenth company car!

Time has certainly flown by but I'm sure that is partly down to working for such a great company. I am very

happy working at Plastribution, they are lovely people and it pleasing to see us moving forward and growing in that time to be a market leader.

One of the nicest things about the job is dealing with so many different people, both internally and with suppliers and customers. I travel to many countries to meet suppliers, but mostly I enjoy helping out my customers and building relationships that last many years.

Right, I must be getting on as have another trip to start. I wish someone would hurry up and invent the teleport device!"

Congratulations Pete...keep calm and carry on! 🌈



“ One of the nicest things about the job is dealing with so many different people, both internally and with suppliers and customers. ”

Peter Shakeshaft
Technical Sales Executive Plastribution

Product list

The Plastribution team is always available to provide advice on all aspects of grade selection including design, processing and properties. So please do not hesitate in contacting us to discuss your specific requirements.

Please remember that, despite our best efforts to do so, it is almost impossible to cover every request for information on the website or through the new portfolios, particularly as new developments are happening all the time.

If you should be unable to find what you require, just get in touch on the phone, email or through the website and, if we really can't help, we will do our utmost to point you in the right direction.

Plastribution Limited
Clinitron House,
Excelsior Road,
Ashby Business Park,
Ashby-de-la-Zouch,
Leicestershire LE65 1JG

Tel: +44 (0) 1530 560560
Fax: +44 (0) 1530 560303

Email: sales@plastribution.co.uk
www.plastribution.co.uk

Supplier	Material	Brand Name
Engineering polymers		
	TPE/SEBS	Megol®
	TPE/TPO	Apigo®
	TPE/TPV	Tivilon®
	TPE/SBS	Raplan®
	TPE/PVC	Apiflex®
	TPE/PVC/NBR	Apilon 33®
	TPE/PVC/TPU	Apilon 64®
	TPE/EVA	Apizero®
	TPE/EVA	Apifive®
	TPU	Apilon 52®
	COAGULATION TPU	Apilon 52 c®
	CAST ELASTOMERS PU	Apithane®
	MASTERBATCHES	Apicolor®
	TPU BIOPLASTICS	Apilon 52 Bio®
BIOPLASTICS	Apinat Bio®	
	Cyro XT	Clear Polymer
	Cyro	Cyrolite
	PMMA	Plexiglas
	PEEK	Vestakeep
	PPS	
	SPS	Xarec
	Polycarbonate	Tarflon
	PC/ABS	Xantar C
	PC/PET	Xantar E
	POM (Acetal Copolymer)	Iupital
	Polycarbonate	Iupilon
	PA12	Plustek
	PA6	Plustek
	PA6.6	Plustek
	Long Glass Fibre Compounds	Polytron
	PP Compounds	Ramofin
	PBT	Ramster
	Conductive	Pre-Elec
	Static Dissipative Compounds	Pre-Elec ESD
	TPE - Highly Conductive	Preseal TPE
	Thermally Conductive Compounds	Pretherm
	TPEE/TPE/TPV	Heraflex
	PA6.6 Industrial (Italy)	Heramid A
	PA6.6 (Industrial) Germany	Heramid A
	PA6 Industrial (Germany)	Heramid B
	PA6 Industrial (Italy)	Heramid S
	PA6.6 FR (Italy)	Radiflam A
	PBT	Radiflam B
	PA6 Prime FR (Italy)	Radiflam S
	PA6.6 Prime (Germany)	Radilon A
	PA6.6 Prime (Italy)	Radilon A
	PA6 Prime (Germany)	Radilon B
	PA6.10	Radilon D
	PA6	Radilon S
	PA6 Prime (Italy)	Radilon S
	PBT	Radifer
	LCP	Sumikasuper
	PES	Sumikaexcel
	PPS	Susteel

Supplier	Material	Brand Name
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Specialties

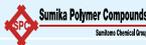
	Purging Agent	Barrel Blitz Universal
	Biohybrid	Cardia Biohybrid
	Masterbatch - Colours	Colourtone Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - Blowing Agents	Colourtone Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - Nylon	Colourtone Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - PBT	Colourtone Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - Polycarbonate	Colourtone Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - POM	Colourtone Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - PVC	Colourtone Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - Universal	Colourtone Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - UV Stabilisers	Colourtone Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - Anti-static	Colourtone Masterbatch
	rPET	brighterPET
	rPET	PurePET
	Mineral Filled Compounds	Granic
	Masterbatch - Blowing Agents	Kafrit/Constab Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - Flame Retardant	Kafrit/Constab Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - Process Aids	Kafrit/Constab Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - Slip Agent	Kafrit/Constab Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - UV Stabilisers	Kafrit/Constab Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - Anti-block	Kafrit/Constab Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - Colour Universal	Kafrit/Constab Masterbatch
	Masterbatch - Slip/Anti-block	Kafrit/Constab Masterbatch
	Repro LDPE - Natural/Grey	LDPE GREY
	Repro LDPE - White	LDPE WHITE
	Repro LDPE - Black	LDPE BLACK
	Repro LDPE - Green	LDPE COLOUR
	Repro HDPE	HDPE BLACK
	Agglomerated PE	PE ECOIN

Styrenics

	ASA	Kibilac
	SAN	Kibisan
	BDS	Kibiton
	ABS	Polylac
	Polycarbonate	Wonderlite
	PC/ABS	Wonderloy
	SMMA	Acrystex
	SMMA	Styrlilc
	GPPS	Total GPPS
	HIPS	Total HIPS
	HIPS Alloys	Total HIPS Alloys
	HIPS FR	Total HIPS FR

Supplier	Material	Brand Name
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Polyolefins

	Functional Polymers	Queo
	LDPE	Ipethene
	PPHP	Capilene
	PPCP	Capilene
	PPRCP	Capilene
	Speciality PP	Carmel Clear
	PPHP	Ducor
	PPCP	Ducor
	PPRCP	Duclear
	PPHP (Phthalate free)	Dupure
	PPCP (Phthalate free)	Dupure
	LDPE	ExxonMobil LD
	LLDPE	ExxonMobil LLD
	mPE	Enable
	mPE	Exceed
	HDPE	ExxonMobil HD
	EAA	Escor
	EVA	Escorene
	Functional Polymers	Exxelor
	PPHP	ExxonMobil PP
	PPCP	ExxonMobil PP
	PP Plastomer	Vistamaxx
	PP Compounds	Exxtral
	TPV	Santoprene
		PP Compounds
LLDPE		Sumitomo
PPCP		Sumitomo
	LDPE	Total LD
	LLDPE	Total LLD
	MDPE	Total MD
	HDPE	Total HD
	EVA	Total EVA
	PPHP	Total PP
	PPCP	Total PP
	PPRCP	Total PP
	mPPRCP	Lumicene
	MDPE	Lifen
	HDPE	Lifen
	PPHP	Mosten
	PPCP	Mosten
	PPRCP	Mosten



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