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# TRI-STAR MOLD: GETTING COMFORTABLE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

By Mark Stephen, managing editor

Being known as the strong, silent type might have worked wonders for film stars like Gary Cooper, but it's probably not the most helpful approach for Canadian moldmakers trying to get ahead in today's economic climate.

Indeed, with increased competition from overseas and dwindling markets at home, low key may well be the kiss of death. Yet many moldmakers still operate this way, taking pride in a job well done without wanting to draw attention.

One shop that's learned to change in this respect is Tri-Star Mold Inc., a custom injection mold designer and manufacturer located in Cambridge, Ont. The 12 year old company — which currently employs 17 workers in an 8,600 square foot facility — has made a series of recent moves intended to make itself better known: expanding its

business development activities, targeted marketing including a new website, and purchasing of new equipment.

"We were tired of being a well-kept secret in the plastics industry," said Pete Florica, Tri-Star's general manager. "Also, we were getting frustrated by losing contracts to Asian moldmakers when we know we're capable of providing superior long-term mold tooling services and solutions."

## MODEST INVESTMENT PAYS OFF

Adopting a more PR-friendly approach wasn't accomplished without some trepidation, though. "I'm a toolmaker, and I've always been leery of trying to oversell myself," Florica said. "At the end, the decision our company made was to make a modest investment to get professional help



Dave Tomic, CNC manager, and Pete Florica on the shop floor.

to better publicize what we do.”

Beginning last year, the company undertook a campaign to improve both its public face and its shop floor capabilities. On the business development front, Business Development Management Services Inc.’s Mark Nagy was brought in to focus on penetrating new accounts, bringing over 23 years of technical sales experience.

The next order of business was Tri-Star’s website. “Our old website definitely needed updating, but we didn’t want to get carried away and make our new website too complex,” Florica said.

TecMar Group, a technology marketing agency with specialized expertise in the plastics industry, provided strategy, planning, public relations and sales tool development. The results to date include a website that better reflects Tri-Stars philosophy and capabilities. Users can explore company information, customer endorsements, download newly developed infor-

mation sheets and gain access to secure FTP services and online meetings, used to expedite communications with customers across North America.

The company has also invested in new equipment from suppliers like Makino and Cam Tool to further improve productivity, performance, and reliability. “From the start, we always went after the challenging, difficult work — like complex insert molding, and work with high tolerance parts — and accordingly always used high-end Swiss and Japanese machine tool equipment and programming software,” Florica said. “In order to seize new business opportunities, we knew it was necessary to continue acquiring the latest cutting-edge technology.”

### THE ROAD AHEAD

One market that Tri-Star is targeting is medical parts applications. “We became ISO 9001:2000 certified to improve all

aspects of our business practices enabling us to pursue medical parts contracts,” Florica said. The company is also searching for contracts in the aerospace industry. “We think we’re well-suited for micro-machining, wire and sink EDM services for precision satellite components, for example,” Florica said.

“At Tri-Star, we always knew we had strengths, but didn’t consider them very exciting from a marketing point of view,” Florica explained. “In today’s climate, however, moldmakers can’t afford to work under the radar. We’ll never promise anything we can’t deliver, however, and this is what gives our marketing efforts legitimacy.”

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**Business Development Management**  
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