

Diverse Mold Offerings Sustain Moldmaker, Secures Future Business

By Sherry L. Baranek

Pelco Tool & Mold, Inc. (Glendale Heights, IL)—a producer of close-tolerance, high-quality tools for the closure, food and beverage, personal care, and medical industries—designs and builds a plethora of molds, including, single face and stack, rotating ratchet ring (RRR), conventional unscrewing, strip, side-action, collapsible core, compression, front-loaded core, insert and prototype.

Established in 1963 by Emil Peluso, Pelco first operated out of a basement before moving the company to a small location in Lyons. Nine years later the company moved again to a 6,800 square foot facility in Broadview. In 1991, Dick Truhlar, Roger Wittersheim and Rob Suva—three moldmakers who combined have more than 100 years of moldmaking—purchased the company. In 1995 Pelco built a 16,000 square foot facility in Glendale Heights, IL. In 2001, the company completed a 5,000 square foot addition.

Today, the company is 35 employees strong with sales of \$13 million. Pelco's marketing directors Joel Bianchi and Kevin Suva note that the company's knowledgeable, skilled employees coupled with an impressive equipment list allow them to manufacture "any and all" complex components. "We add new, top-of-the-line machinery annually to keep us on the cutting edge," Bianchi states. "In addition to our recent purchase of a second Makino high-speed machining center, we have added an additional Hurco 3+2 axis machining center and an additional Mitsubishi EDM Sinker."

Like many shops, the economic downturn in the years 2008 and 2009 brought challenges. In lieu of layoffs, Pelco operated with reduced hours. "This allowed us to have the resources to be prepared when jobs began to increase," Suva points out. "It also helped us to streamline our processes, become more efficient and ultimately, become more competitive. We began to increase our interaction with our customers with regular visits to find out what they needed and wanted with their new mold builds."

Packaging Trends

According to Kevin Suva, Marketing Manager of Pelco Tool & Mold, lightweighting continues to be a trend in the packaging industry. "Green initiatives are driving the lightweight cap," Suva explains. "We also are seeing changes in mold size, particularly more cavitation, tighter pitch, and more stack tools." These more robust designs result in less mold maintenance and less in-press mold maintenance, Suva adds.



Photos courtesy of Larry Naus of Pelco Tool & Mold, Inc.

Pelco builds high-cavity stack tools utilizing copper alloys.

Pelco also expanded its core competencies. "We are known for being an expert in providing round components," Suva notes. "We wanted to expand our offerings, so we invested in our milling department by purchasing our fourth high-speed machining center and adding the 3+2 machining center to produce non-round components and are currently building a lot of high-quality, non-round closures and hinged closures."

The biggest challenge Pelco currently faces is making tough decisions on new equipment purchases and increasing the shop size with the continued uncertainty of the economic market. Bianchi points out that Pelco will continue to focus on goals of continuous improvement, consistency, high-quality tooling, innovative design, on-time delivery, communication, and complete customer satisfaction.

Pelco plans to use these driven employees to explore opportunities in growing markets. "We will continue to focus our efforts in the caps/closure market and supply the big players in the industry," Bianchi emphasizes. "We also plan to increase our focus on medical opportunities, with a goal of doubling sales in medical components, as well as continue to invest in technology and experienced personnel—along with additional support in sales and project management—to achieve these goals." **MMT**

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