

CASE STUDY

How one forward-thinking injection molding company launched a successful expansion into bioplastics



COMPANY:

Country Plastics, a state-of-the-art custom injection molder based in Woodlake, California.

COMPANY PRESIDENT:

Jay Ayres

In the injection molding business, there's a tendency to stick to the tried-and-true. When efficiency is everything, there's a baked-in wariness of new materials and methods. But Jay Ayres remembers the seasoned vet he worked with early in his career who saw things differently: "New is always better."

Today, these words guide Ayres' approach to business, keeping him focused on the future. He has learned new can be better. But you have to be savvy enough to recognize when a material that seems promising will fail in key areas, like quality, cost, efficiency and market demand.

So when the first bioplastics material became available early this century, Ayres was a willing early adopter. For his business, bioplastics offered an opportunity to gain experience, build a reputation and establish connections with this niche product. In other words, "I want to create a job for myself."

PROBLEM

When you look at the earliest attempts to make products from bioplastics 15 to 20 years ago, the story Ayres shares is a familiar one. In 2005-2006, he found a bioplastics producer he thought he could work with.

During testing, getting the material to flow proved difficult. When they could get it to work, the quality of the finished plastic was brittle and poor. Between uneven production and quality issues, it was clear that bioplastics needed more research and development before it was ready.

Despite this early failure, Ayres kept an open mind about bioplastics. But learning to sort the hype from the genuine article was quite an education process, he said, with plenty of dead-end prospects along the way.

SOLUTION

Eventually, Ayres got in touch with Green Dot Bioplastics. From start to finish, they were better than the rest. For starters, they provided detailed answers to his questions, and the samples arrived immediately. And when Country Plastics processed Green Dot's compostable resins for the first time, everything worked flawlessly.

Ayres calls this product an "accomplishment."

"It was smooth right out of the box, as long as you follow the processing instructions to a T," Ayres said. "That's big. That's very big for them."

And big for Country Plastics because this was a material they could put into real-world products.

Green Dot fit all three requirements Ayres was looking for in a bioplastic resin.

- It works in existing equipment without time-consuming and costly modifications.
- The resin flows and processes smoothly.
- The result is a high-quality plastic that could be made into a consumer-friendly product.

RESULT

Because of the quality and processability of Green Dot's materials, Country Plastics can now manufacture products for their customers from bioplastic material. In addition to that, Country Plastics uses Green Dot compostable bioplastics to make their own line of compostable garden products.

Looking ahead, Ayres is realistic about the future of bioplastics. He acknowledges that petrochemicals won't be going away. But he sees great potential in replacing single-use plastics with biocompostables. As costs align with what consumers are willing to pay, he expects growth.

When it happens, Country Plastics will be well-established in the space.

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