



# Customers Care About Their Product Not Our Process

I am very proud of our rotomolding industry. We're blessed with talent, skill and a maverick style that has helped put rotomolding on par with blow molding, injection molding and other processes. It's precisely because we bring so much to the table that I get disappointed when I see that some of us aren't marketing our services in a way that creates maximum perceived value in the eyes of our prospects and customers. Too often, I see Web sites and print marketing materials from rotomolders that are inwardly focused. They highlight only the rotomolder, machines, facilities and the obligatory photo of grouped parts are shown. This approach isn't necessarily wrong,

it's just that our prospects typically use a different thought process when looking for a manufacturing partner and the inward focus described doesn't help us become a part of their thought process. Consider an entrepreneur with a growing agricultural tank company. He wants to expand into fuel tanks. He doesn't immediately look for a rotomolder. More likely, he searches for a manufacturer with experience in fuel tanks. This experience with the product is tantamount to whether the manufacturer uses rotomolding, blow molding,



injection molding or even metal fabrication for that matter. Many of our prospects think in terms of their product, not in terms of our process. In fact, the potential customer may have never even heard the term Rotational Molding. They think in terms of pump housings, septic tanks, laundry trucks and playground slides and are looking for an experienced manufacturer with an understanding of their individual part. Demonstrating such a track record instills confidence and adds an extra measure of comfort that makes customers willing to pay a premium. Positioning your company as a leader in this manner across several different target markets helps stave off competition and defy the commoditization of your work.

As rotomolders, we know that manufacturing a tank to hold ethylene glycol is not fundamentally different than manufacturing a tank to hold orange juice. But our food and beverage customers see it very differently than the airport operations customers, and they want to know that our juice container won't get them in hot water with the FDA or USDA. The airport manager is equally concerned about regulators such as the FAA and the EPA. It seems simple enough. Show a food industry prospect that you've manufactured USDA-approved containers, and show a chemical industry prospect that you've manufactured UN-approved containers. Each one will likely perceive your company as a leader with a specialty in his or her particular industry and reward you with a willingness to pay for both your engineering and manufacturing services. In fact, they would be more inclined to pay your asking prices than to pay less to

a company without relevant experience.

yet, many rotomolders haven't updated their marketing approach to suit the perspective of the customer. Nowhere is this more glaring than on the Web. Consider the domain name. Many of us just use Name-of-the-company dot com, and our own Meeseinc.com is a prime offender. Since the search engines consider the domain name as one critical part in determining whether a Web site is included in search results, a Web site address based on the company name will typically be left out of the product-oriented searches that many of our prospects use in finding a manufacturing partner. A Google search for "bulk chemical handling container", for example, yields page after page of Web sites that offer information on chemical containers and nary a listing for our Meeseinc.com Web site. However, the chemical container Web site that was developed specifically to position our company as a chemical industry specialist earned a spot on the first page of the search

results at number six. Search engines consider this Modroto.com/chemical site relevant to the search and it has attracted far more chemical industry prospects than the URI based on our company name, which has been the standard used by most rotomolders.



# Internet Marketing Do's and Don'ts

- **Don't use hyphens in domain names.** Although this has little or no impact on whether search engines find you, hyphens make people work harder to find you and it makes remembering the Web address much more difficult. When people simply type a product into their browser window or search boxes, they rarely use a hyphen.
- **Do include warehouse/facility locations on rotomolders' web sites.** It demonstrates that shipping may be relatively fast and less costly than shipping large parts across the whole country. In addition, people feel extra comfort working with people nearby. Showing you offer a facility in several parts of the country (or the world!) may be the difference in whether you get the job or even the call.
- **Don't design the entire web site in Flash.** This programming language is used to create a large amount of the visual pizzazz on the Web today but search engines still have trouble reading the content on these sites and may not index them – even with some of the work-arounds some programmers are using. If being included in the search engines is important for your company then avoid designing your site entirely in Flash.
- **Do integrate elements of Flash into the site for some sizzle.** Rather than designing the entire site in Flash, snippets of Flash deliver the movement and animation while more traditional programming invites the search engines to easily find the relevant content and index the site. The home page at MODI laundry.com, for example, uses Flash to create an attention-getting image loop for a featured product but is otherwise programmed in the HTML that search engines (and many people) prefer.
- **Don't put people on an email list without their consent.** Do require opt-in subscription. It only takes a handful of SPAM complaints for an ISP to block future email transmissions.

A market-or product-specific Web site, like the chemical site mentioned above, effectively captures Web-based sales leads and advances them towards a sale. PropDecor.com, for example, features a select line of decorative products. Content is focused directly on the needs of the rental shop managers, banquet managers and other people who use or resell the products. This setting positioning the company as an expert partner in event décor creates far more perceived value for the products among this audience than placing them within a Web site surrounded by commonly rotomolded items such as fuel tanks, dock floats and filter housings, which is the typical approach. Conceptually, would you rather purchase an expensive watch from the owner of a specialty jewelry boutique or from a part-timer at a mass merchant's counter?

On many occasions, I've come across company-focused Web sites where the home page offers a standard introduction and little else. Finding the product-oriented information prospects want often requires navigation off the home page. While this setup allows the search engines to index that one critical sentence about the company, its mundane information is unlikely to instantly connect with the prospect who is searching for expertise with a product or market. Qualified prospects



MOD POP for displaying lighting products.

may simply hit the back button, never to learn about your expertise. And, your marketing team may never know a lead was generated, albeit lost.

For Web site content to be effective, it needs to quickly connect with the prospect and demonstrate experience with what they need (or with something reasonably close). Once interest and a level of comfort have been achieved, then support the pending decision to contact you for substantive information about the company history and capabilities. This two-step sequential process captures viewer attention and guides them on a path that follows logically to a phone call or email.

### Email Marketing

Online communication with customers and prospects is typically one way to connect with them, even with the rise of blogs and instant messaging. However, with email designed-in as a companion to your Web site, you can send information back to your customers and prospects while advancing the market-specific approach that boosts the value of your services. The list may be segmented to customize the information published in each message based on the market, product category, job title or other criteria. By publishing different information for different prospects, these email communications reinforce the positioning that your company offers relevant experience in that particular market. Our email newsletter *Prop, Décor & Display Ideas*, for example, which coordinates with our PropDecor.com Web site, may be segmented to permit

one email to be sent only to wedding planners, a second version only to photographers and a third only to rental shop managers. Alternatively, we can blast a message to thousands of subscribers at the same time publishing information that is relevant to everyone on the list. Our Web site tracking program typically documents a 500% or better increase in traffic at the Web site within hours of sending the email. Phone calls, catalog requests and orders follow. Photographers and set decorators feel confident they are buying props from a knowledgeable prop developer as opposed to buying from a plastic molder. Banquet managers feel confident they are buying wedding décor from a knowledgeable wedding product developer, and visual merchandisers feel confident they are buying from a knowledgeable display product developer. At our custom services site Rotomolding.com, these decorative props and pedestals are nowhere to be seen.

This approach is not about hiding any of our work. It's about showcasing the work that prospects find relevant. Thanks to the Internet, we can tailor how we appear to a diverse range of prospects in a wide number of disparate markets with speed, flexibility and impact like never before possible. It is such a huge step forward from the old days of printing a few brochures a few times a year! How we market our companies and our industry on the Internet, and how effectively we use it, will dramatically affect how rotomolding fares in the future.

If you have comments or questions, I would love to hear from you. Send comments to Bob Dunne at [rdunne@usa.net](mailto:rdunne@usa.net) or see [www.Rotomolding.com/bobdunne.shtml](http://www.Rotomolding.com/bobdunne.shtml).



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September 2005, JohnDel and Plaster Process Casting merged with Plasti-Cast Mold. Founded in 1952, Plasti-Cast has long held a reputation for high-quality cast rotational molds, fabricated molds and repair/refurbishing services.

957 Tallmadge Road  
Kent, Ohio 44240  
Tel: 330.677.4750  
Fax: 330.677.4847  
email: [johndelinc@aol.com](mailto:johndelinc@aol.com)  
[www.johndel.com](http://www.johndel.com)