

Plastics News

Smith says new workers can learn and become the ‘go-to guy’

August 4, 2016

Adam Smith's interest in plastics was first sparked in high school.

“Like many kids I didn't really know what I wanted to do when I grew up. I was in the CADD [computer-aided drawing and design] program at the Career Technical Center in my hometown, and really enjoyed it. Once my senior year was coming to an end, my teacher mentioned that Ferris State University had a good CAD program. A few of my friends and I all decided to go to Ferris.

“I fell in love with plastics, designing injection molds, and after graduating from the CAD drafting and tool design program, I transferred to the plastics engineering program.”

Today Smith is operations manager at PRISM Plastics Inc., an injection molder in Chesterfield, Mich., that specializes in critical safety parts for the automotive sector.

Age: 29.

Social media: Twitter @smithaj57, LinkedIn.

Career highlights: Since starting with PRISM Plastics in 2010 as a project engineer, I have helped implement a more paperless system (a direction the company was already moving toward). I was a key part in helping to utilize the capabilities of our ERP system in engineering.

As a project engineer I was responsible for taking a plastic part from our customers,

rising
stars
2016



Adam Smith,
operations
manager at
PRISM Plastics

and led them from tool design through start of production. In 2011, when the industry really began to pick back up, I was responsible for multiple customers and more than 50 tooling projects.

First plastics job? A summer internship at Stihl Inc. in Virginia Beach, Va.

Greatest achievement? Finding a job in an industry that I really enjoy. I don't think many people can say they enjoy their job. I was able to take something I liked doing in high school and evolve into something I like doing for my career.

Biggest failure and what it taught you? I treat all mistakes or failures the same. I know going into it my intentions were good, I had sound reasons and data to back up the decisions I made, and I

learned a valuable lesson to not repeat the same mistakes again. Everyone makes mistakes, and as long as those mistakes weren't made due to a lack of caring, and weren't meant maliciously, you can't ask for more than to not repeat them.

What is your current challenge at work? As we add more complex jobs and things become busier, maintaining control to make sure the focus is on good parts per hour. Making sure changeovers and tough jobs are evenly spread out with minimal overlap is very important.

What emerging technology most interests you? Conformal cooling. As a project engineer, and even in operations, I have found some parts that could really benefit from being more creative with ways we cool a mold.

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Another technology that really interests me is home automation with things such as the Nest thermostat. I'd love to see some of that innovation spread to industry.

What about the plastics industry surprises you? How a lot of companies focus solely on the bottom line, leading to offshore tooling and manufacturing, but with that come a ton of quality issues. Yes, stateside piece prices may be a little higher, but look at our quality record. In the

long run, after the dust has settled, you ultimately end up spending more [going offshore].

Best advice you've received? My mom always taught me to speak up for what I believe in, to speak truthfully and to be open-minded.

What advice would you give to a person considering a career in plastics? Get ready for the plug—enroll in Ferris State's

plastics program. Go Bulldogs!

If college isn't for you and you wanted to get into plastics, the best advice I can give is make yourself valuable. Absorb and learn as much as you can. If your supervisor needs a backup in shipping or maintenance, volunteer. Learn new things. Be the “go-to guy.” Showing that kind of initiative and learning multiple facets of the company will take you far.

What job do you really want to have in the future? I'm hoping to become a CEO/president of an injection molding company, maybe start my own company.

What do you do to relax? Relax on the pontoon boat with friends and family. ■