

Opportunities to Offer Customers Value-added Features in Rotomolding Abound

Second in a Six-part Series on Decorating and Labeling Rotomolded Products



Last weekend, Spring fever hit me hard. The weather was perfect. The sun was shining, the sky was crystal blue and the smell of fresh-cut grass was in the air. It was a great day for playing catch with my youngest son and to take a spur-of-the-moment road trip to Phoenix for some Spring training action. We were off! Spring had officially arrived.

When we returned home the next day, my wife informed me it was time to do some dreaded Spring cleaning chores. My first assignment was to reorganize a big box of unfiled family photos. I began by sorting them by month, year and family event, until each of my containers was neatly organized. After applying large white labels to the sides, ends and the lid of each bin, I coded them with my permanent Sharpie marker. Now, when my boys ask me where to locate the pictures taken during last year's family vacation or their sports events, I know exactly where to find them.

This exercise illustrates the challenges that all businesses face when faced with the efficient tracking of valuable product inventories. The task may seem daunting, but the results definitely are worth it.

Opportunities abound to proactively offer our customers important, value-added features that can improve both the quality and the serviceability of their rotomolded products. Permanent graphic labeling and decorating ideas



An example of a permanent graphic with a bar code.



An example of a permanent graphic with hand stamping.

are an effective way to achieve the goal of satisfying the wants and needs of our existing and potential new customers who utilize the rotomolding process to manufacture their parts and components.

In the last issue of *RotoWorld*®, I touched on how including permanent product identification graphics may be one of the hottest new issues in

our industry. Now, I'd like to expand upon that topic because inventory control is greatly increasing in importance.

Just what is a "LABEL"? We all have our own unique Passport ID number. Each American citizen also has his or her own Social Security Number that inevitably follows us throughout our lifetime. These identifying numbers, in essence, are our permanent labels. Imagine life without them! Just as human beings have their own unique makeup and personal characteristics that identify who we are in our respective societies, many of the products that are produced by the rotomolding process also need to have individual recognition and traceability which can be provided by a label.

A label, broadly defined, is a piece of paper, polymer, cloth, metal or other material affixed to a product or container, onto which is printed a legend, information concerning the product, addresses, etc. A label may also be printed directly on the product or container.

The uses of labels have many specialized uses such as: product identification, name tagging, warnings and other forms of information. For example, serial numbers are used to identify certain unique products. One type of serial number - a vehicle identification number (VIN) - identifies a unique motor vehicle so that vital records of that vehicle are available for review whenever necessary.

Product numbers in many businesses clearly identify the product by linking to a full description. Product identification codes such as Universal Product Code, Global Trade Item Number and International Standard Book Number allow multiple businesses to use a single product identification code to indicate one unit of a mass-produced product.

It is also possible to have revolving serial numbers, barcodes or various numerical information to identify a product or series of products. And more importantly, this vital information can now be incorporated into permanent graphics instead of using adhesive-backed labels or stenciled paints which ultimately fail!

Permanent product identification by a label is already quite common in some industries. These labels need to be able to bond securely to the surface for its intended life under extreme conditions. For example, a label on an automobile engine needs to be resistant to the heat and oils encountered and to be secure for many years of use.

Permanent product identification is even more important when we are talking about polyolefin products. Polyolefins are difficult to decorate and don't allow things to adhere to them, especially in harsher environments.

Thinking about these options opens up a world of opportunity. With standards becoming more and more stringent with the likes of the Department of Transportation (DOT) and Haz-Mat, polyolefin product manufacturers can now market their products as the next evolution since the informative graphics are permanent. This is just not possible with current standard products in the field today since they don't hold up quite like polyolefins do.

Taking control of your inventory on site with hand-stampable graphics

Graphics can be designed to receive changing information such as date of production, internal fluid volumes,

serial numbers, lot numbers, even shift numbers. These graphics feature clear windows or blank fields which capture the changing data before the graphic is permanently molded into or onto the part. Manufacturing companies can now integrate this information directly into the graphic transfers on site, making this a very flexible labeling process.

Graphics can include changing information:

- date of production
- internal fluid volumes
- lot numbers



An example of a permanent graphic with a printed serial number.



An example of a permanent graphic with a bar code and hand stamping.

Manufacturing companies can integrate this information directly into the graphic transfers using carbon black pigment on site. The result: Your polyolefin part or product is permanently identified. So if there is a problem with a warranty, for example, you or your customer can find out who molded it and

when. This flexible process saves you time and money.

Hand stamping helps you track:

- fuel tanks
- pallets
- water tanks

Tracking polyolefin products with consecutive serialization and bar coding graphics

Consecutive serialization and bar coding graphics let you and your customers easily keep track of polyolefin products.

Products using bar coding and consecutive serialization graphics:

- Large shipping pallets
- I.B.C. totes
- Chemical drums and barrels
- Material handling containers
- Hazardous storage tanks

Rotational molders easily can install serialization graphics directly into the mold surface at the loading station. Alternatively, serial numbers can be applied using a secondary heat source to a polyolefin product after the product has been molded. When scanned, bar codes allow your inventory to be easily identified and tracked. So no matter where your products are - at the molding machine, being moved in the warehouse or being transported and received at the shipping dock or in hard-to-reach places - you'll always be apprised of their whereabouts.

How graphics add value

Bar coding and consecutive serialization graphics add value to products which must be continuously tracked during the useful life of each container.

They can also help your company comply with the growing demand for ISO and other quality standard certifications.

Labeling products with consecutive serial numbers and bar codes can add to a company's bottom line and provide satisfaction in knowing where their inventory is. Just like labeling my family photos felt really good! Now I'm ready to tackle another project.