

A Rotomolder's Guide to Enhancing Your Brands

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



It's summertime. Time to make final plans for the family's next big vacation. This year it's off to a really cool Oceanside resort in Southern California. We'll soon be off to the beach to escape the heat for a few days. Do some swimming. Take the boys out on a boat. Do some deep sea fishing.

Maybe paddle a kayak along the shoreline. But, that's only if we're each paddling a brightly colored rotomolded polyethylene kayak that has a ton of sharp, good looking, permanent graphics that stand out prominently for everyone to see! (I guess it's hard for some of us to ever get too far away from our trade, isn't it?) The look and smell of plastic is omnipresent, even when we're on a family vacation. Sound familiar?

Producing good-looking rotomolded products is how we all make our living. We take pride in knowing that the products and parts that we're so closely associated with will always look good, not just when we ship them out the back door, but also when they're floating along under the bright sunshine, through the pounding waves of the saltwater ocean. Even after they've been cleaned with chemical solutions and power washed by the maintenance crew at the busy resort. Hey.....looking good after we get older is important too!

Yep, summer's here. That means it's also time to think more about what I've learned at many of the important trade shows related to the rotomolding industry that emphasize the aggressive marketing and



Decorating with colorful, permanent graphics transforms this kayak from an ordinary plastic product to an extraordinary kayak.



A close-up of the colorful EQUATOR permanent graphic on a rotomolded kayak.

promotion of their products made for the water sports industry.

Having attended many water sports shows and events over the last three decades, I've witnessed how these events held each summer here in North America set the tone and inspire new trends for the entire sports industry for the upcoming year and season. At these shows, participants get a sneak preview of the hot, new "it" colors, new product designs and even the type fonts which will be used to decorate and label their new water toys, kayaks, canoes, paddle boats, jet skis, docks and small watercraft, many of which are made by rotomolding companies from all around the world.

This year will be no exception. After attending the **Miami Boat Show** a few weeks ago, our own trusty ex-rotomolder, ex-rotomachine builder, ex-kayak manufacturer and current paddler, turned MIGS™ Tech Manager, John Schreiner, and I will be traveling together to the big **Outdoor Retailer Show** being held in Salt Lake City, Utah in early August. Next up my European colleagues, Nick Moldan (another paddler) and Peter Clark, will accompany me to the water-

themed **ARMO Conference** in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Sept. 7-9, where we'll feast our eyes on the many beautiful marine environment products which will be on display (hope they smell good too).

The **German Kanumesse Kayak Show** will follow just a week after the ARMO meeting. Another good one on our short list is **The Paris Boat Show** which happens in week one of December. It never ends!

Trade shows teach us about USP

The shows will give us a good idea of how well a company has differentiated its products into a piece of recreational equipment that a discerning consumer would be proud to own in what may be a saturated market. We'll see how well they understand their target audience(s) as exemplified by their unique selling proposition (USP). In most cases, USP may rely heavily on a design crafted by a rotomolder with imaginative finishing touches which turn what otherwise might have been an ordinary, unbranded polyolefin product into something very special.

Steve Jobs, CEO of the innovative company Apple, believes, "In most people's vocabularies, design means veneer. It's interior decorating. It's the fabric of the curtains or the sofa. But to me, nothing could be further from the meaning of design. Design is the fundamental soul of a human-made creation that ends up expressing itself in successive outer layers of the product or service."

To clarify, product differentiation lies in creating a highly functional and unique shape - clean and sophisticated lines, and adding in exciting colors and logos, drawings and designs which reflect the company's, and therefore, the customer's, personality. We all know what the Apple logo looks like and the brand image this successful company consistently projects. Through years of brand-building, Apple is recognized as a quality company. Think for a moment about some of the brands you think exude quality. What do they look like? What features do they have that make them outstanding? It's a good exercise to look closely at how we approach designing, molding and decorating both the tried-



This proud fisherman displays his catch while perched on a fishing kayak featuring colorful, permanent graphics.



Nick Moldan tries out NuCanoe's new kayak at the Outdoor Retail Show, August 2007.



Mold In Graphic Systems® own John Schreiner and Scott Saxman speak with Andy Zimmerman, owner of Legacy-Liquidlogic, at the last Outdoor Retailer Show.

and-true and brand new rotomolded products.

Start by molding a good product which suits your audience

In the case of a friend who manufactures kayaks, he makes sure to produce different kayak models that best suit different body types, skill levels, and lifestyles. He chooses dynamic colors and catchy names that his audience will like to see featured prominently on the different models. His thorough approach to design, decoration, marketing and merchandising ensures his customers enjoy kayaking and keep coming back for more!

Decorating adds value to your polyolefin products

Your quality decorated polyolefin products are an extension of your or your customer's brand identity. A brand is a symbolic embodiment of all the information connected to the product and serves to create associations and expectations around it. A brand often includes a logo, fonts, color schemes, symbols, and sound, which may be developed to represent implicit values, ideas, and even personality.

Brands, branding, and brand equity have become increasingly important components of culture and the economy, now being described as cultural accessories and personal philosophies. I can't stress enough that permanent labeling and decorating offer a substantial quality benefit not only for rotational molders, but customers and end users, as well. Graphics are highly visible, multi-colored and permanent subsurface graphic transfers. They elevate rotationally molded products from a piece of hollow plastic to something special and unique - giving your products a colorful brand identity.

New polyolefin products being designed for today's

marketplace are making greater use of integrated graphics and color, which help to achieve the overall look of the finished product.

Mold the graphics into your products

At the start of my Roto Decorating series in RotoWorld, I mentioned that polyethylene traditionally has proven to be difficult to decorate. In most other industries, the common labeling and coating methods used, such as painting, direct silk-screening, hot stamping, or the simple application of adhesive-backed, paper or vinyl stock, printed labels to identify their products, or even metal plates which don't bend with a product's shape, all have critical limitations when being considered as options for typical rotomolded polyethylene products or components. These methods restrict the options for the rotational molding



Beautiful graphics set Liquidlogic kayakers apart from the pack.

supplier's graphics and labels are compatible with PE – and if they are completely integrated into the polymer matrix during the molding cycle. Permanent graphics are protected from UV, chemicals, solvents, acids, fuels, extremes of temperature (hot and cold) and flexing (including expansion and contraction), so they last the life of your product.

By working with your graphic supplier, your products will look great and deliver an outstanding brand image.

A final word: Use your imagination!

By using imagination and taking a strategic approach to decorating polyolefin products, rotomolders and their customers will build their brands. Albert Einstein is widely quoted as saying, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." Who am I to argue with Einstein?

industry. What to do?

Unlike stickers and other labeling processes, graphics can be molded in during the rotomolding process. Or post-mold graphics can be applied, using a secondary heat source, after molding your polyolefin product.

Before ordering graphics, conduct some research to find out if your graphic

Quiz

The following marketing quiz tests your brand intelligence. Identify the brand associated with the following brand icons:



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

Answers: 1. Nike 2. Mercedes 3. Texas Instruments 4. AT&T 5. Marmill Lynch

Rotomoulding Temperature Profile Solution

The RotoPaq system monitors temperature data throughout the heating and cooling cycle of the rotomoulding process:

- improve quality – closely monitor polymer phase transitions
- logger accuracy $\pm 0.3^{\circ}\text{C}$ (0.5°F)
- up to 10 measurement channels
- real time RF data collection and basic data logging
- lightweight and compact
- now available with optional waterproof barrier

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