

## Coffee Break with Jeff Held, President, New Berlin Plastics Inc.

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Held

### What was the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

“Last year, after touring our facility, a plastics engineering consultant remarked that New Berlin Plastics was Wisconsin’s ‘best-kept secret.’ While meant as a compliment, we knew that this was something we needed to change. So, we made marketing a priority and teamed up with Third Person Inc., a Milwaukee-based advertising and web design firm.”

### What’s new at your company?

“We have two new team members on our senior executive staff – Mike Miller and Tom Frank. As our new director of engineering, Mike brings a wealth of knowledge to our customer base with his extensive background in injection molding processes, part design, and mold design and construction. Tom, who joined us as director of sales and marketing, brings a new energy and excitement to our sales team with almost 10 years of experience of selling in our industry. The fresh perspectives, valuable insights and ideas for continuous improvement that Mike and Tom bring to the table are already benefiting the company.”

### Do you plan to hire any additional staff or make any significant capital investments in your company in the next year?

“We have plans to add to our engineering and sales staffs later this year. In addition, we will continue to design and build automation centers utilizing robotics to enhance labor productivity.”

### What will be your company’s main challenges in the next year?

“Our greatest challenge this year will be to manage our business through this economic downturn. While we are fortunate that our customer base is quite diversified, we have had some year-over-year reductions in sales to existing customers. Overall though, it’s been very manageable so far, especially compared to those molders that are concentrated in one market segment, such as automotive. In fact, we’ve actually been very busy lately quoting new projects for both existing and new customers. We also expect our ‘Smooth Move’ Mold Transfer Kit and other marketing efforts to result in new opportunities.”

### What’s the hottest trend in your industry?

“I would say that the latest trend is the evolution of mid-sized molders from just molding and shipping plastic parts to providing more comprehensive manufacturing services. For many of our customers, we now mold

the parts and then assemble those with other components to produce a subassembly or a completed product. In some cases, our customer never actually touches the product; we ship it directly to their customers.”

**Do you have a business mantra?**

“Be fair and honest with all the people you deal with – including customers, suppliers, and employees alike – and expect the same in return.”

**From a business standpoint, who do you look up to?**

“Having spent over 30 years in business. I’ve worked with many fine individuals whom I admired greatly. However, in many respects, it’s our employees that I look up to. We have some employees that have been with our company for more than 30 years. Their dedication to our company and customers drives our success through good and even not so good economic times. Their unwavering commitment reminds me how important it is to make the right decisions and chart the best course for the company so that we can continue to succeed. I don’t want to let them down.”

**What was the best advice you ever received?**

“Several years ago, at a friend’s suggestion, I joined TEC, The Executive Committee. In a way, my TEC group functions as an informal board of directors, providing me with unbiased advice. As a business owner, it’s invaluable to be able to consult with other business owners who’ve often faced and solved whatever particular problem I may be facing.”

**Jeff Held**

President, New Berlin Plastics Inc.

**Company address:** 5725 S. Westridge Drive, New Berlin, WI 53151

**Company Web site:** [www.nbplastics.com](http://www.nbplastics.com)

**Industry:** Custom plastic injection molding for OEMs that are manufacturing motorcycles, water treatment equipment, power transformers, construction equipment, and commercial paper dispensers, among others.

**Number of employees:** 120

**Your education:** Bachelor’s degree in accounting from UW-Eau Claire

**Family:** Wife, Nancy; and sons, Warren and Karl.