

## Best Practices in Mold Maintenance and Repair

More complex molds have created a need for more complex maintenance and repair operations. This opens the door to increased revenue for shops prepared to do maintenance and repair work on more complex molds.

Here are some words to live by when it comes to raising your maintenance and repair game:

- **Seeing is believing.** Having in hand the most recent shots from a particular mold is immensely valuable. Your diagnosis of the problem will be more accurate if you inspect both the mold *and* the part it produces. Even better, compare a recently produced part to one produced during the mold's initial run.
- **More is better.** Ask for utilization data on the mold, such as number of cycles/shots, number of opens/shuts and so on. Get archived 3D design data for the tool. Otherwise, you'll be spending time reverse engineering the tool rather than solving the customer's problem.
- **Where have you been?** Get some history on the mold. Who designed it? Who manufactured it? Who has worked on it? Where are the previously identified problem areas? How were they addressed?
- **Pro bono.** See if you can diagnose the problem with a phone call. Most plastic processors have in-house tool shops, and they might be able to solve a minor problem if they are given some direction. There isn't any revenue in it for you, but you'll strengthen your relationship with that customer.
- **Timing is everything.** Production schedules can accommodate preventive maintenance; take advantage of planned shutdowns. Communication is key. Proactively asking about planned shutdowns allows the mold repair shop to work around the customer's timeline.
- **Death, taxes and mold repair.** Minimize your customer's downtime by leveraging "real-time" communication tools. Smartphones can speed up the process. Communicate with customers via text message. Send photos of your diagno-



Image courtesy, Precise Mold and Plate.

Scott Nickerson leads a team of seasoned craftsmen at Precise Mold and Plate.

sis. You're bound to catch your customer more often at their mobile number (and vice versa).

- **Get me that quote ASAP.** A faster quote turnaround means less customer downtime. Ask them to send pictures of the mold and recently produced parts with their RFQ. Seeing pictures of the potential job (versus quoting blind) allows you to provide a more realistic timeline for the project. It should also minimize the number of back-and-forth questions about how you plan to solve the customer's problem.
- **Validate your work by sampling.** Use a precision spotting press to stress-test your solution. It provides better accessibility and simulates your customer's production environment. Pressures can be measured and adjusted, mitigating risk of damaging other parts of the mold.
- **Dedicate staff.** Dedicating staff to maintenance and repair means greater specialization in skills and creates mobility, allowing you to take your experts to the problem. Customers prefer on-site repair and maintenance. If the mold eventually returns to your shop, assign the same technician. Continuity is important, and using the same technician minimizes the chance for disassembly and reassembly mistakes. /MMR

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