



MADE BY PEOPLE, BUILT WITH TRUST



DUTCHLAND

Headquartered in Oostburg, Wisconsin, Dutchland Plastics is a leader in rotational molding that has been in operation for half a century.



Written by Samita Sarkar

Dutchland Plastics was founded on humble beginnings by Bill and Nancy Claerbout in 1967 to manufacture lawn ornaments such as deer and gnomes via molding, filling them with concrete, and painting the finished products. Never shying away from innovation, as the company developed and grew, it began to manufacture products out of polyethylene and engineered resins, servicing a variety of industries, including recreation, marine, construction, industrial, and telecom.

Since its inception, Dutchland Plastics has been steadily growing. Its original plant was about two miles away from the current facility, and this plant was expanded more than a dozen times over 40 years. Finally, in 2013, the company consolidated its operations into a modern 170,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art manufacturing facility for plastic products.

In the last three years, it has experienced exponential growth rates, doubling its sales and currently employing approximately 300 people—most of whom CEO Clyde Swoger considers to be true craftsmen.

How has the company remained so successful for so long? Swoger attributes it all to Dutchland's amazing people.

"At the end of the day, this is a labor-intensive process. There is a lot of craftsmanship that goes into these products, and the people are the most critical ingredient

to a rotomolder's success. First and foremost, we have great people," he tells us.

This craftsmanship has been recognized by the broader industry, and Dutchland Plastics has been awarded "Product of the Year" for the last three consecutive years by the Association of Rotational Molders. The award selection is made by the company's peers, attesting to Dutchland Plastics' position in pushing the envelope of the rotomolding industry.

In 2016, the company was ranked as the third largest contract rotational molder in the U.S. Now, in the year of its 50th anniversary, Dutchland Plastics has plans to become the number-one rotational molder in the country in the next three to five years. Using advanced technology and proprietary processes, Dutchland Plastics has the expertise to make products beyond the scope of capabilities of other manufacturers.

"We use an excess of 100 different resins and raw materials that are often specific to an individual product. Our capability to mold products from a broad range of materials allows us to meet the exact specifications of our customers," says Swoger.

Dutchland Plastics manufactures over a thousand different products, and is proud of every single one of them. "We manufacture products; we don't just mold plastic. If our customer wants us to manufacture a kayak, we ➤






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► would not only mold the plastic shell, but we would apply the molded-in graphics, and we would cut and rout and foam-fill. We would assemble, package, and ship a finished kayak out of our facility," explains Swoger.

Dutchland is highly skilled with in-mold decorating techniques to create logos, or even bar codes, seamlessly molded into its products. "Our team can also mold-in threaded inserts and more." But even though the growing company embraces the industry's most leading-edge technology, the "personal touch" is embedded into its corporate culture.

Dutchland Plastics strives to be a trusted partner to its customers, and shares many of their experiences on its company website and in its marketing. For example, the fishing kayaks that Dutchland manufactures for NuCanoe are highly customizable kayaks that are so stable, one can securely stand up in them. Dutchland also partnered with designers at KI to create the award-winning KI Sway Lounge Chair, one of the most comfortable lounge chairs on the market.

Customers partner with Dutchland Plastics because they have trust in the company's reputation, which has consistently been one of integrity and pride in workmanship, established over decades. "We have a litany of new customers and new products,



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seemingly on a daily basis. I think it's a great compliment that they have not only partnered with Dutchland Plastics—and most of our customers do—but they are heralding their experience and are happy for us to use their name," says Swoger.

Dutchland Plastics has grown substantially over the last three years, and in the next three, it is poised to double again. "We plan to continue our growth trajectory. We expect that will be accomplished through organic growth as it has been in the past, but also through acquisitions. We also hope to be able to expand geographically, which would allow us to better service customers in other locations," Swoger informs

us, as in addition to its main location in Oostburg, Wisconsin, Dutchland Plastics also has a facility in Sherrill, New York. "As we grow, we will continue to invest in technology, innovation, and our people," he adds.

This spring, Dutchland Plastics announced that as part of its new growth plan, it is currently accepting applications with the goal of adding 50 manufacturing positions. On the ideal candidate, Swoger stresses that the company is looking for those

who want to make their career with Dutchland Plastics. Sharing Dutchland Plastics' well-known commitment to work ethic and quality craftsmanship is much more important than experience when seeking a position with the Dutchland team.

"We are looking for a person who is hard-working, quality-conscious, and willing to be trained. We don't expect someone to come with rotomolding experience, but if they come with the right work ethic and attitude, we can teach them the skills that they need," he says.

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Dutchland Plastics is a company that is unique in its staying power, not only as it grows within the industry, but also in its

treatment of its team members. Its company motto and philosophy is "known by our products, powered by our people." In the current climate where it is common to change careers and even companies every few years, Dutchland Plastics is a place where many people have worked for decades.

"We have people who have worked at Dutchland Plastics for 10, 20, 30, 40—even 45 years. These tenured employees are the backbone of our company. We would love to have people ►



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► who choose Dutchland as a career be able to see our next 50 year anniversary," Swoger adds.

To maintain employee satisfaction, Dutchland Plastics has implemented a broad range of training programs to address the needs of new employees as well as those who have been with the company long-term. Cross-training allows people to do several jobs within a company, enhancing the team's job satisfaction and allowing the company to be more flexible.

Dutchland Plastics has also partnered with Lakeshore Technical College for extensive external training programs which included lean training for each and every employee at Dutchland Plastics. Other benefits full-time employees receive include health and dental, life insurance, 401(k), paid time off, and participation in various events the company organizes, such as cookouts and picnics.



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Part of Dutchland Plastics' growth plan included raising starting pay and hourly wages, increasing the number of paid holidays, reviewing current benefit plans, and enhancing family-friendly activity programs.

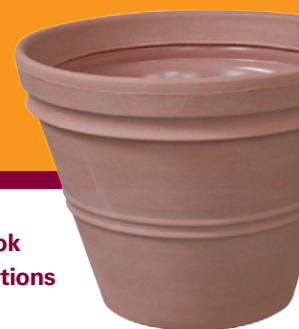
The company is on a mission to provide innovative, quality customer solutions in a safe, rewarding environment, while caring for its people and communities.

As a testament to that, since the 1990s, Dutchland's Director of Business Development, Daven Claerbout has dedicated his auctioneering skills to helping charitable organizations. He conducts more than 60 auctions annually at fundraising events including Make-A-Wish, Cystic Fibrosis, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Ronald McDonald House, local schools, and many more.

As Dutchland Plastics grows, it will continue to treat people well, whether they are customer-partners, employees, or other members of the community. Swoger tells Business in Focus that it is the people that have earned trust within the industry and made Dutchland the renowned rotomolding company it is today. "A contract manufacturer makes products, but at the end of the day, they're selling trust," he says. ■

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