

THE MAGAZINE WITH INSIGHT

BUSINESSFOCUS

JAMESTOWN PLASTICS TRUE HEROES



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WHEN THE COVID-19 CRISIS HIT, JAMESTOWN PLASTICS ADJUSTED THEIR WHOLE BUSINESS MODEL TO RESPOND TO IT.

TRUE HEROES

PROJECT MANAGED BY: **TIMOTHY GARWOOD**

It's 61 years since Jamestown Plastics was founded in the small town of Jamestown, New York as a company thermoforming plastic into various end products. Fast-forwarding to today Jamestown Plastics has produced products for everything from medical device packaging, blister packaging, consumer goods packaging, durable components, automotive applications, even heavy-duty durable products. However, first and foremost it has always been a company driven by innovation.

“We have always taken the philosophy that we want to be the go-to choice for our customers. We truly believe that with innovation the front-end differentiates us from other folks plying a similar trade,” says Jay Baker, CEO of Jamestown Plastics. “To that end, I and the company own multiple patents in the USA and around the world, with multiple inventions that have become highly commercially viable. We take a fresh approach to problem-solving. It’s driven our growth and set us apart.”

CHANGING TIMES

While Jamestown Plastics has a strong offering, they’re operating in a challenging and constantly changing market.

“I’d say the largest challenge we have faced over the past several decades has been the shift in the globalisation of procurement. We have had to replace four or five times our number one customer to shift and head in a new direction,”

Baker admits. “In each instance, it was nothing to do with our performance and more to do with the transference of entire industries from the United States to China and offshore procurement. For example, at one time we were the number one packaging source for Fisher-Price toys. Today I do not believe Fisher-Price makes anything in the US anymore. I could go through a list, industry after industry that departed the United States. They simply weren’t there anymore so we had to shift our focus onto what was left and how to make ourselves more unique.”

It’s an environment that has meant Jamestown Plastics has frequently had to be adaptable in its approach.

“Our success has been driven by being very, very, nimble,” Baker says. “If we were not a nimble company that can adapt quicker than everyone else, we wouldn’t be here. We can get from design to tooling packages to production at a high rate of speed.”

« Jamestown Plastics created the revolutionary design for the TrueHero™ face shield.

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ADDEV Walco, part of ADDEV Materials group based in Pittsburgh (USA), has a proven market experience in the automotive industry, represented by an IATF certification and an OEM approach. During these unprecedented times of COVID-19 pandemic, ADDEV Walco was proactive to automotive industry slowdown by pivoting towards the healthcare and hygiene sectors. We have reallocated a part of our production to create and manufacture protective solutions against the COVID-19 spread. Our successful collaboration with Jamestown Plastics for face shields solutions has proved our ability to be a multi-sector converting actor. Our well-known materials suppliers recognize our technical converting expertise and service: as a 3M™ Preferred Converter, ADDEV Materials is proud to be part of this selective group which certifies an outstanding converting know-how ensuring high-quality standards in converting, business relationship and customer service to the end-customer. Finally, our position of intermediary in the value chain makes us a privileged partner of our customers with a duty to innovate and meet technological, social and environmental challenges.

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▲ Jay Baker
CEO, Jamestown Plastics, Inc.

Ultimately, for Baker, it comes down to attitude.

“I have been telling people that are employed at Jamestown Plastics since I’ve been running the show, 30 years, I’m not looking for the ten ways we can’t figure out how to do something, I want to hear how we are going to make it happen,” explains Baker. “If you distil everything down to that core message you build a culture around getting the job done and weed out folks that don’t have that mindset. I’ve many retired military on my staff who understand ‘mission-critical’. For them there’s no such thing as failure, they get the job done and invest in those things that allow you to complete the mission. That’s why we’re investing millions in the tool room and the shop floor to accomplish our missions.”

RESPONDING TO COVID

Of course, in 2020 Jamestown Plastics has found its positive attitudes and adaptability truly put to the test, with

the dawning of the COVID-19 pandemic. It's fair to say they stepped up.

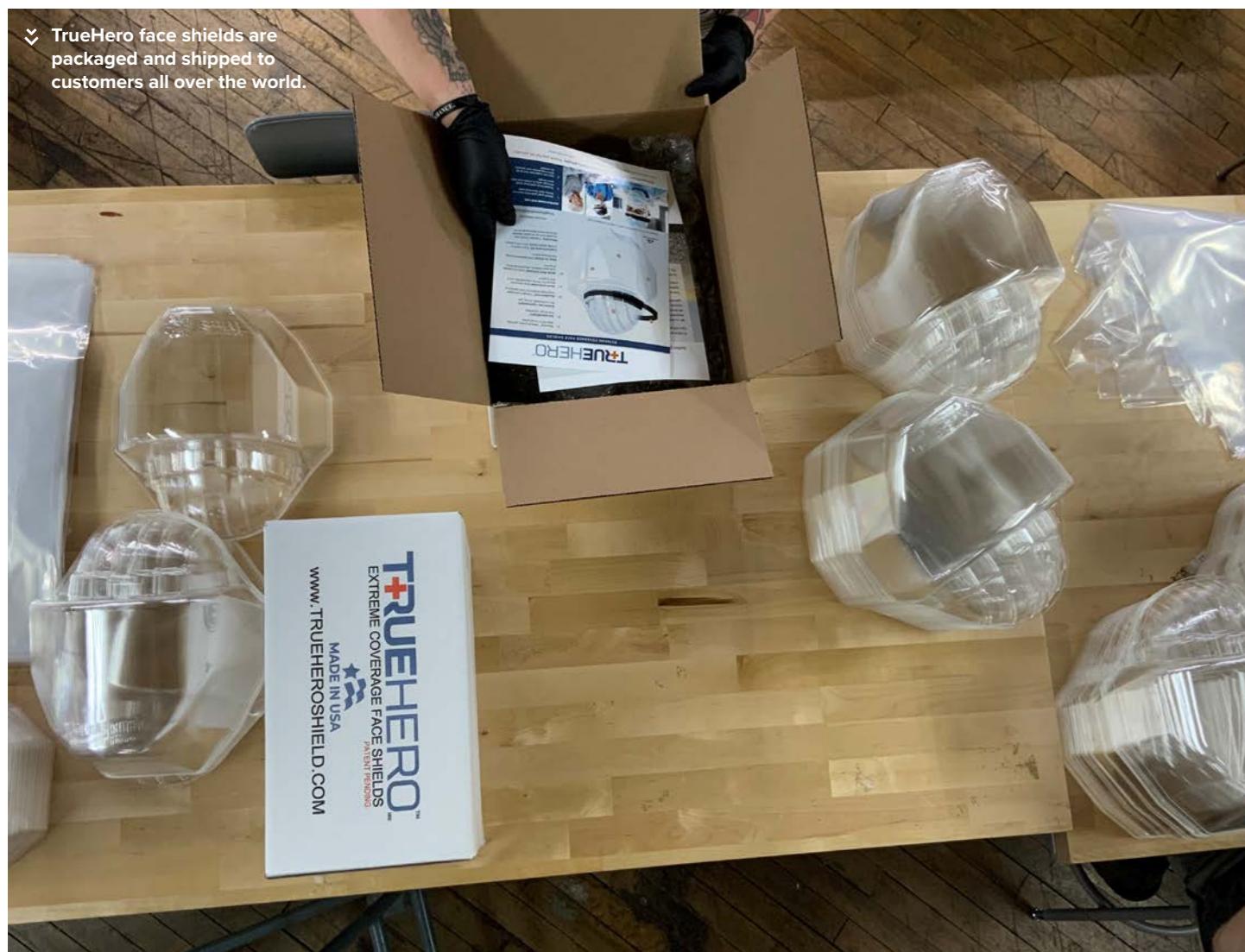
“I think the interesting thing about what we just discussed and COVID-19 is that very philosophy and belief system that my fantastic employees possess is why we’ve been able to launch a new company called True Hero LLC,” Baker explains. “We were approached in March 2020 by health professionals seeking personal protection equipment because there was a dire need. Across the world, there’s a dire need, and we never played in that field because it had become a completely commodity-driven field. That’s why when it came to things like face shields they were coming from the Pacific Rim.”

This was clearly a challenge, but Baker also saw it as an opportunity. Importantly, Baker didn't want to produce the same bog-standard shields he was seeing everywhere else.

“I said, we have the ability to do something here. Let's not do »»



Clamtainer applications also include sterilization and anti-microbial packaging.



the same thing that's been done for 80 years. We sat down with a clean sheet of paper- or a clean computer screen, and in a few hours, we had a revolutionary design and I said cut the tool," Baker explains. "We did it that night and by three o'clock the next day we had the first product in hand. The response was overwhelming, with customers saying that this was the best face shield they'd ever used. So we went into full production and accomplished that in eight days, and seven days after that we'd shipped 225,000 to the State of Florida. Shortly we'll have five additional products in that company line, all seeking patent protection."

One of the key aspects of Jamestown Plastic's face shields was that they allowed for communication. "Unlike face masks, they allow human communication to be as close to what it was prior to COVID, post-COVID, over basically every other solution which is mainly just face masks," Baker says. "For example, we have whole lines going out to take care of students coming back to school where they need to see their teachers' faces. Almost 95% of human communication is non-verbal, so the psychological impact of removing that is huge."

These are strange times, as Baker is the first to admit,

"IT'S BEEN THE BUSIEST TIME IN OUR COMPANY HISTORY."

"Some of our customers that we shipped to were shut down while others in the medical field were going as fast as they could possibly go. It's been the busiest time in our company history."

This wasn't something Jamestown Plastics could achieve alone, and Baker speaks highly of the supply chain partners that made their

"I THINK THERE'S GOING TO BE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES, POST-COVID, IN PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS OF LEVELS OF PROTECTION. FOR EXAMPLE IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY, YOU SEE PEOPLE PREPARING YOUR FOOD, THE EXPECTATIONS ABOUT HOW PEOPLE SHOULD BE DRESSED."

achievements possible. ADDEV Walco supplied the foam insert for the headband as well as the strap that holds the face shields in place.

"They're an absolutely critical piece of the puzzle. You can't make butter without milk. Those supplier relationships we've established over the years are absolutely critical," Baker insists. "Just as much as our dedicated staff, if you don't have the raw materials and components, nothing's going to happen. The way we conduct ourselves is we work with our suppliers the way we'd want our customers to deal with us. We're honest, upright, keeping our commitments, and our supply base really came

through for us. We appreciate what they did under a crazy set of circumstances."

When we finally get through COVID and things return to normal, that doesn't mean things will be returning to normal for Jamestown Plastics.

"I think there's going to be fundamental changes, post-COVID, in people's expectations of levels of protection. For example in the food industry, you see people preparing your food, the expectations about how people should be dressed," Baker points out. "There will be fundamental shifts and the product line we've developed won't be a one-time thing. Volume may drop, but we're in this for the long run." ☐



Products are inspected in the Brownsville, Texas cleanroom of Jamestown Plastics.



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