

# Slowdown leg up for rotomolders

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Economic slowdowns can give rotational molders a chance to draw some business from other plastic processes.

Low tooling costs enable customers to get hollow pieces in low volumes quickly and at one-half to one-third the cost of blow molding tooling, said Julie Stout, marketing manager with rotational mold maker Wheeler Boyce Co. in Stow, Ohio.

"There is an economic slowdown, but people are still inventing new products, starting new companies and needing new plastic products," said James Leitz, vice president of marketing for rotomolder Gregstrom Corp. in Woburn, Mass.

"In these times of economic uncertainty, companies will select the most economical way to introduce that new product," he said.

Whether a slower economy stimulates business for rotomolders is a subjective question, said Jack Pape, vice president of sales and marketing with rotomolder Meese Orbitron Dunne Co. in Saddlebrook, N.J.

"The criteria for cost efficiencies and savings is there and might spark some interest in the process in an economic downturn," Pape said.

Uncertainty tends to drive end users to a process that requires lower upfront

tooling investment, allows for short runs and has a short lead time from design to production, Leitz said.

"Rotational molding fits all three of these criteria."

The combined cost of tooling and piece price for a required quantity can be lower than competing processes, although, by itself, the piece price may be higher.

Leitz noted a downside: Bad times can draw some fringe customers with dubious financial resources.

"We have to be very careful about extending credit to these questionable ac-

counts," he said.

Leitz said toolmakers exclusively serving rotomolders sense an economic improvement.

"They feel they have turned the corner, and things are starting to pick up" after three bad quarters since October, Leitz said. "Maybe they are just seeing [that] customers are turning to rotomolding because they can't afford the other processes."

Stout said that with the current economic slump, "people are holding onto their money [and finding it] easier to jus-

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Granger Plastics of Middletown, Ohio, has tapped into a growing market with its rotational molded polyethylene storm shelters. See story on Page 11.

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