

Old molds made new again

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Companies go out of business, obsolete a product line, or get bought by other companies that have their own molded parts suppliers. These are only some of the reasons old molds get left behind to collect dust. The recession meant that many OEMs trimmed their mold budgets, so mold manufacturers saw their customers delaying new mold builds. However, many of these old molds can get a second life through refurbishing or by reusing the mold bases and other components to build new molds.

Icon injection molding refurbishes molds for major customer

When products are not obsolete, but the tools are in such bad shape they can no longer make good parts, salvaging the molds might be an option. Icon Injection Molding Inc., a Phoenix, AZ-based custom molder, helped one company save a lot of money by refurbishing molds that make approximately 50 different part numbers for a pool products company.

The Phoenix-based pool company makes its own products, such as in-floor pop-up heads for automatic pool cleaning systems. The molds had been running at another molding operation and there were problems with the components.

“The molds had been built to subpar specifications in the first place,” says Danny Kleitsch, co-owner of Icon with his two brothers. “There were no safety mechanisms to prevent collisions, slide carriers had galled, and there was no guided ejection or parting line locks. Additionally, the molds were running in a facility near the ocean in which a lot of PVC was being run, so these molds were in pretty rough shape.”

Because there were so many molds, Icon invested in the program to refurbish the molds, providing the mold rework at a discount in order to capture orders for upcoming new molds. “We did quality work to get these molds in good working order, and the pool company recouped its investment in the first month’s production,” says Kleitsch.

Another company, Dillon Precision, a manufacturer of ammunition reloading equipment, had problems with poor quality parts from its molder. The main issue was flash due to mold wear. At the recommendation of a colleague, Scottsdale, AZ-based Dillon transferred 144 molds to Icon, which repaired Dillon’s deteriorated tools at its in-house mold facility.

The tools were then processed on Icon’s electric and hybrid molding machines using a 28-step scientific molding technique. This resulted in a 43% improvement in quality for Dillon and a 20% cost reduction on the purchase of molded components due to cycle time and process improvements. Mold uptime was improved by 40%, and Dillon once again had good-quality parts for its products. —[Clare Goldsberry](#)

