



The Cliffs of Moher on Ireland's Rugged West Coast

Rotoplas

Still the major event on the global rotomolding calendar, Rotoplas always promises to deliver something new and, most importantly, the chance to meet almost every major vendor from the industry in one room. As the only public rotomolding event open to molders, suppliers and potential users alike, it creates a unique forum that has typically attracted many visitors from overseas as well as North America. Even as the increasing quality of overseas events keeping molders updated on the latest advances on a local basis means that it has been reduced in scale, it remains important. I highly recommend everyone to attend.

Can we make it better and attract more people? Molders want end-users and designers; suppliers want to see more molders and designers; the Association wants them all. Most rotomolders know about it through their suppliers or *RotoWorld*®

magazine but it can be difficult to generate enough interest to have them attend. What is it that they need? New technology, new materials, new ideas and potential access to new customers will all help but given the relatively slow pace of change in rotomolding, some people use the Rotoplas show as a way to bypass the intervening conferences and catch up on the industry once every three years.

Groups such as SPE, SPI and IDSA all offer potential pathways to larger audiences and rotomolding associations are working more closely together with them to help promote specialist topics such as rotomolding. There are undoubtedly other avenues and associations that could be pursued. The key is to find the hook to draw people in – where is the dynamic in the industry? Where can we reshape the perception of the industry or push it into



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new areas? Who are the people to promote this? How do we reach the designers and end-users?

We have to recognize that rotational molding is less of a coherent process-based industry than a group of market-based molders who have worked hard to establish themselves in niches or specific OEM/consumer industries. They often do not want to promote other molders in their markets. An idea presented at the SPE event in Ohio to put a logo on all rotomolded parts similar to the ‘Intel Inside’ logo has a youthful appeal – the problem is that most molders would prefer that their customers never know that other molders exist!

The associations have to be the neutral players in this area – their goals are to grow the industry. More awareness, more applications, more molders helps everyone (yes, even the other molders).

Apology


On the theme of promotion, I was quite rightly taken to task by my good friend Sir Peter Mooney who happened to be flying on the same flight as me to Ireland recently. He pointed out that my comments at the recent SPE RETEC event in Independence, Ohio had been interpreted as a criticism of the organizing committee. I had pointed out that while the event was relatively well attended, the ratio of suppliers/consultants to molders was somewhere in the order of 90-10. This was probably the highest I have ever seen and I likened the search for a molder to hunting for the Big 5 in Africa. The efforts of the committee were not in question; there was undoubtedly a lot of time and energy spent by all to encourage molders to attend. Rather, I was trying to point out the simple fact that such events will not be sustainable if we cannot encourage more molder attendees; suppliers will not be able to justify attending if there are few potential customers.

Molders are busy. They are bombarded with more information than they can handle and many are running leaner than ever with their staffing. To attend a physical meeting they have to feel that the perceived value is greater than the time invested, even if it is only a local one-day drive-in. Networking is a strong draw and most events allow enough time for people to meet, although perhaps there could be 'forced' events – speed dating for introductions. Content at the event is also most important – a wide range of topics in short focused segments by relevant experts in a condensed format will offer the maximum choice and generate most interest; sales talks light on content or general non-industry talks used to fill time on a program fool no-one and simply force jaded veterans to sit politely while gritting their teeth. SPE has always been about promoting technology and education and the basics never fail: practical information, updates on material, equipment and processing techniques presented by people

who know the subject and whose content has been properly vetted will help raise interest, and hopefully attendance. If enough papers cannot be found to fill an effective program then the interval between events simply needs to be extended.

At the Western Edge

How long does it take you to unwind when you are on holiday? Four days? A week? On a recent 10-day vacation in Ireland with our neighbors, I found myself stuck in the classic US dilemma of not letting go and being drawn in constantly by emails and calls. It took 3-4 days to separate myself from the main issues and then a concerted effort to stop completely and realize that the whole point of the exercise was a mental break. I finally downloaded the iPhone 'Where's

the Nearest Guinness' app and switched off. My European friends have a much better approach (I was young once and there too) - two to three weeks away: no emails, no calls, no thinking about work. The first week is to unwind, the second week is relaxation and, if they are lucky, a third week for rejuvenation. Most Americans can't quite wrap their heads around this; more worried about whether they will still be needed when they return and picturing the mountain of work to be faced when they do. On the other hand Europeans realize that better vacations mean less stressed employees and (hopefully) better quality work. Long vacations make it tough to work on international projects in July and August but it just means that I'm going to have to go with the flow and take a 3-week break next year! 

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