

Radius Honored for 51 Years of Excellence

Robert Grace



Tom Frank, president and CEO of Radius Packaging Inc., credits his firm's culture and collaborative approach for its success in a highly competitive blow molded rigid packaging market.

"We really embrace change," Frank said in a recent interview. "We have a group of people who are eager to learn and improve all the time. It starts with culture. How do we take technology and use it to our advantage?"

Founded 51 years ago as Schoeneck Containers Inc. by Robert Schoeneck, the New Berlin, Wis.-based firm rebranded as Radius (www.radiuspkg.com) in March 2022 as part of its half-century celebration.

With a highly automated plant in Delavan, Wis., that it opened in 2019, the 225-employee company now runs two plants housing about 30 blow molding machines, three injection molding presses (with clamping forces from 390 to 1,200 tons), and four additive manufacturing machines.

Among its blow molding stable, it counts Rocheleau reciprocating-screw machines, some Kautex and Bekum machines and one Sipa injection stretch blow machine.

Radius for now focuses its regional business in the Upper Midwest, though Frank admits that customers

are always asking the firm to expand beyond that region. "We are looking to find acquisition targets — people who could expand our geographical footprint. That's one of our initiatives." The company is focused on opportunities in the eastern half of the country.

Milwaukee-based private equity firm Mason Wells Inc. purchased Radius in 2020 along with management and other investors.

Today, Radius offers extensive labeling, repacking and surface treatment services. And with the launch of its Delavan plant, the firm added both injection molding and heat-transfer molding (for an in-mold labeling appearance).

The company is very active in the nutrition and wellness sector and saw sales for those businesses more than double during the COVID-19 pandemic. Radius also serves the home care and professional

cleaning markets, as well as food and specialty beverage customers. Its distribution business involves selling a lot of bottles and caps to distributors.

Referring to the adaptable mindset of his staff, Frank says that, for example, "Industry 4.0 was in mind when we built the facility in Delavan ... It's fully automated there. We never had a single issue from a labor standpoint." The firm also has a couple of fully automated packing cells in its New Berlin headquarters plant.

When it comes to product development, he stressed the firm's use of 3D printers. "It's great because we

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Photo courtesy of Radius Packaging Inc.

Radius' team includes, from left to right, front row: CFO Angela Breitbach; Nicole Leiberis, head of marketing; and Lisa Esser, director of quality, environmental health and safety. Back row, left to right: Josh Kouba, VP of operations; Jason Kitowski, VP of sales; Tom Frank, president and CEO; and Chris Haag, director of supply chain.

Frank said at the time, "Over the last 50 years, we've continued to evolve our business to meet the needs of our customers; this is what drove our decision to expand beyond blow-molded containers with capabilities and services like injection-molded closures and labeling that allow us to offer complete rigid plastic packaging solutions."

Now the SPE Blow Molding Division has chosen to honor Radius with its Recognition of Excellence Award, to be presented at ABC 2023, the division's Oct. 23-25 Annual Blow Molding Conference (www.blowmoldingdivision.org) in Chicago.

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can get things to market a lot faster. We have four 3D printers and we use them mostly for product validation. We can touch, feel, see the product before we move to a production tool. For design work. We do use it for fixturing as well, creating things for the plant.”

Frank recognizes the huge focus now on sustainability. That has prompted the firm to do a lot of research into alternative resins and additives, as well as into post-consumer recycled resins and recycled PET (rPET) materials. Radius also is involved with Chemical Upcycling of Waste Plastics (www.cuwp.org) — a group of professors and graduate students from the University of Wisconsin (and also from Iowa and Michigan) that is working on new recycling technologies. Radius has someone on the board of that group.

“They’re working on developing a process to use waste multilayer films that they will break down into base resins and then produce material,” Frank said. “They’re targeting a plant in Green Bay.”

This past March *Plastics News* honored Radius with an Excellence in Industry and Public Service award, recognizing the firm’s commitment to the industry and its community. It specifically cited the firm for its “robust internship and apprenticeship programs and a passion for community education.”

For Frank — who worked in sales and commercial roles for Miniature Precision Components Inc., Dickten Masch Plastics LLC and New Berlin Plastics Inc. before assuming leadership with then-Schoeneck about a decade ago — it’s all about the people.

Repeating his previous point, he stated: “Our culture is the big selling point. Our very collaborative approach. We’re a bunch of enthusiastic, high-energy people who really love our industry. We make work fun every single day.” ●

Robert Grace is the editor of JBM.

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their next generation of leaders. This is a creative way to provide useful services to members above and beyond technical knowledge sharing. Cohort No. 3 will start this fall and run through spring 2024.

One additional strategic goal for 2023 is to complete the integration of the SPE Foundation into the operation of SPE. These were separate entities but recently merged to improve alignment and efficiency.

As you can tell, SPE is actively adapting to and managing the many current changes it faces during these fast-changing times. As your councilor, I'll do my best to keep you informed of important actions as they happen. ●

Geoff Ward is director of engineering and strategy at Agri-Industrial Plastics Co. and councilor of the Blow Molding Division.



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