

## BUSINESS PROBLEM

JR Plastics' traditional business base pulled back significantly after 9/11 and remains sporadic even today. To stay in business and remain healthy, JR needed to diversify its customer base and open up new markets for its products and services.

## SOLUTION

A good deal of JR Plastics' business in 2001 was in support of local companies in the Charlottesville, VA area, particularly companies in the nuclear energy business. Always a somewhat sporadic business, these companies really put on the breaks after 9/11. "A lot of our companies just pulled way back at that time," company owner and CEO David Trent says. "We had to do something to be able to survive as a business. We learned that we can't just rely on the local economy."

Searching the Internet, Trent found the MFG.com online marketplace and decided that he had to give it a try. Since that time, MFG.com has been the key to the company's survival and success. It has allowed JR Plastics to diversify beyond the local area and away from the nuclear industry that has proven so unreliable. "We can make just about anything," Trent says. "Much more than just vacu-formed plastic parts. We make molds; we have a complete machine shop; we do assembly, wire bending and sheet metal in addition to much more." About half of the company's business comes directly from MFG.com these days. The rest includes some regular customers first encountered through the online marketplace

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**-David Trent**  
Owner & CEO, JR Plastics

as well as local businesses. It is also helpful that Trent can quote jobs to fit the capacity available. "Two months ago the machine shop was busy but the vacuum forming side was slow so I quoted jobs for that side. Now, the opposite is true so I'm quoting machining work," he says.

"Sometimes, the customer knows what they want but they don't really know how to get from point A to point B. We can help them there because we have full design and engineering capabilities so we can help refine the requirements and help them get a better product." For some of their customers, JR Plastics builds the complete product – components, fabrication, and assembly.

Trent is particularly pleased with a piece of business secured on MFG.com with a company in Virginia Beach, VA. "I saw the job on MFG.com and we quoted on it. It turns out that this company had been sourcing this particular item to China. They were astonished to learn that we could do the job for them for basically the same price, with

delivery a lot quicker than sourcing to China, and they can communicate with us a lot easier.” Needless to say, JR Plastics got the job and is continuing to work with this customer for additional work. By coincidence, JR Plastics recently secured another job from a different customer who is also in Virginia Beach.

Trent says he uses MFG.com every day. “Sometimes it’s 10 o’clock at night, if I’m traveling or really busy,”

he says. “But that’s an advantage as well – I can go out there and look for jobs any time of the day.” Trent speaks about an instance where he identified a particularly difficult job and decided to quote it, even though he knew his price would be high. Months later, he got a call from the Buyer and started negotiations. “There’s all kinds of business out there (on the MFG.com site). You can match the work to your capabilities and your available capacity.”

### ABOUT JR PLASTICS

Based near Charlottesville, VA, JR Plastics is a full-service contract manufacturing resource offering fabrication, welding, CNC milling, turning, plastics forming and fabrication, hot wire bending, sheet metal work, and more. Complete design and engineering capabilities help customers refine designs, saving customers money and helping produce better parts. JR Plastics serves a wide range of industries including nuclear, food, military, medical, customer packaging, and rehabilitation medical. The company has special strengths in testing and evaluation machinery.

JR Plastics is also a member of another online marketplace that specializes in a niche market that the company is interested in. “MFG.com is light years ahead (of the other exchange),” Trent says of the usability and the tools on the MFG.com site. “It’s like night and day.”

### BENEFITS

- Rich source of work in a wide variety of industries, all over the world
- Highly useable site, excellent search and quoting tools
- Ability to find jobs and enter quotes 24/7 from anywhere with an Internet connection
- Profiles and ratings provide information about prospective customers that help in the quoting process