

## BUSINESS PROBLEM

A family-owned and operated business, K & E Plastics is successful because the owners understand what it takes to perform quality work and please customers. They also understand that the business world is constantly changing and companies must take advantage of new and effective ways to reach out and find new customers.

## SOLUTION

Founded in New Jersey in 1966 by Peter Broderson, K & E Plastics is a job shop specializing in machining and turning non-metallic materials. "We don't do engineering or design," says Eric Broderson, Peter's son, "just machining and turning of sheet, rod, tube, and molded parts... mostly various kinds of plastics." Having moved the company to Vermont in the late 1980s, Eric has been running the business for about a dozen years, although his father still retains the title of President.

Eric first heard about the MFG.com online marketplace from a magazine ad. "It looked like a neat idea," he says, "so we decided to give it a try." K & E finds a lot of RFQs of interest in the marketplace, but only quotes on jobs when Broderson identifies some available capacity coming up in the schedule. "We're at about 95% utilization right now," he says, "so you won't see a lot of quotes from us. But looking ahead, we have some room in the schedule, so I'll be quoting on jobs over the next couple of days." Broderson typically quotes jobs to fill in the schedule from about 1 to 4 weeks out through work secured on

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*-Eric Broderson  
K & E Plastics*

MFG.com. Most of K & E's work is small lots – a few pieces at a time. The shop often changes set-ups on each machine as many as 5 or 6 times a day. Interestingly, Broderson has found more RFQs for plastics turning work on MFG.com than for machining. Since turning is currently their smallest department, he has ordered a new CNC turning center with live tooling so K & E can take more advantage of the opportunities.

"Communication with the buyers is critical," Broderson says, especially since machining on plastics is not the main line of business of a lot of the suppliers he competes with. "It is tempting to award the job to a metal shop that says 'heck, we machine stainless, we can certainly do plastic' and bids the job at, say, \$2.50 per piece. But then they try to do the work and the parts don't come out the way they thought they would. Maybe it's really an \$8.00 part, to do it right. But the metal shop doesn't know that and the buyer might not understand the difference. We know what we need to do to make it right – we just need to communicate that to the buyer."

Speaking of doing it right, Broderson has nothing but high praise for the MFG.com website functionality and usability. And he should know; he has been a member of another online marketplace and says there's no comparison. "We absolutely love the user-friendliness of the MFG.com site," he says. "I'm not the kind of guy that wants to sit in front of a computer all day and MFG.com makes

sure I don't have to. Everything is right there. I click on it and it opens up all the information I need."

One memorable job that K & E secured through MFG.com was to make an equipment container used on unmanned submarines by the Navy. "I got to visit the site and meet the builders," he says, "and see the subs. They were doing some video taping for the History channel when I was there. Pretty cool." The container had to be machined from a solid block of Delrin (a special type of plastic) about two feet square and 5 inches thick, with a number of precision holes and grooves for wires and pipes, and for mounting the box on the outside of the sub.

### ABOUT K & E PLASTICS

As a plastic machining and fabrication company, K & E works with a wide variety of materials from very inexpensive paper-based materials to the most highly-developed -- and expensive -- engineering plastics including ABS, acetal, acrylic, canvas-phenolic, epoxy-based phenolics, fiberglass, fish-paper, linen-based phenolics, nylons, paper-based phenolics, Peek, PEI, polycarbonate, polyester, polyethylene, polypropylene, PPS, pvc, teflon, UHMW, vulcanized fiber and more. K&E has established relationships with material producers for volume-buying power with major material producers including Delrin, Extren, Hydlar Z, Lexan, Micarta, Nylatron, Plexiglas, Ryton, and Ultem from Norplex, Quadrant, GE Plastics and other major manufacturers.

Parts range from sub-miniature -- mere 1000ths of an inch in length and width -- to parts that are 7-feet long, 4-feet wide and 4-inches thick. K & E CNC machinery and technology produce parts efficiently and to exacting specifications. Machine table sizes range from 16 x 12 inches to 60 x 96 inches.

### BENEFITS

- Excellent source of RFQs and potential business to fill the schedule and keep the shop productive
- Can quote jobs when work is needed (capacity available)
- Very user-friendly site -- extremely well designed and functional

K&E Plastics has experienced steady growth over the forty-plus years of business, but is still a family-owned and run business and plans to stay that way. Machinists have an average of 15-years of experience, so productivity and quality are extremely high. Quick turnaround on quotes are a specialty. Working with electronic format drawings allows quote and then program parts to increase efficiency, lower costs and provide speedy lead times.