

Keller Products Celebrates 30 Years of Business



Keller Products, A Division of Plastic Design, Inc., is celebrating 30 years of business.

Started in July of 1990 by Richard Strauss and his son Jonathan, the original business concept was built around a proprietary water filter design. Soon, the company was established in the industrial water filtration market. At this point, Richard designed a patented system for removing oil from water, to be used primarily to treat air compressor condensate for safe discharge. While working on an application in a large plant, the maintenance manager asked the pair to look at another problem area for him in his machine shop. The challenge involved keeping the coolant clean in the machine sump—requirements that suited Keller Products' expertise perfectly.

The company quickly went from prototype to production of a portable recycling system. Jonathan Strauss remembers: "Being in New England, we were hip deep in machine shops. Aerospace, defense and firearm production were the main drivers. One of the challenges when we entered the market was that some of the more established competitors were 5x to 6x the cost of our unit, so there was a bit of a credibility issue. The other challenge was that not all the coolant companies had developed fluids that could easily be maintained in this fashion. It also became clear that a single design was not going to satisfy all the requirements, so a family of products was developed."

Although some significant changes came to the market itself, Keller was quick to adapt. One change was that customers preferred dedicated systems versus a portable unit for a shop. Keller responded by designing the flagship TKO line. The second major change was the emergence of the worldwide web as a marketing platform. Since all of the products designed by Keller could ship via UPS, this development would play a pivotal role in the growth of the company.

Late in 2016, Keller was acquired by Plastic Design, Inc. "The merger allowed access to additional resources required to grow the business. This ultimately led to a record year in 2019 when Keller sold over 1,000 TKO units, plus robust sales activity in the other product lines," said Jonathan. "It has been quite a journey, definitely not for the faint hearted. However, it was an opportunity for my Dad and I to work together, and that is something I will cherish forever."

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