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R&B is introducing new Max extruders

By Bill Bregar

PLASTICS NEWS STAFF

CHICAGO — R&B Plastics Machinery LLC, known for making high-volume extrusion blow molding machines, has chosen NPE2009 to launch a new line of Max single-screw extruders.

R&B (Booth S20063) is displaying a Max machine with an extruder diameter of 2½ inches.

On the blow molding side, R&B is demonstrating parison control with Siemens and Allen-Bradley controllers, as well as an assortment of its blow molds.

The Saline, Mich., firm is known for its large rotary, shuttle and wheel machines. The firm also is a major remanufacturer of blow molding machines. R&B for years has made extruders for its own blow molding machines, as well as for some customers.

R&B now is launching a push to sell extruders more broadly, said Al Hodge, vice president of sales.

“What’s new about this is essentially the Max name, and we’re now configuring it to be a standalone extruder,” he said during a recent interview.

Hodge came to R&B late in 2008 from Standex Engraving Corp., a maker of textured rolls. He also has worked at extrusion controls supplier Facts Inc.

R&B President Robert LaGanke said selling single-screw extruders is a way to generate more steady business.

“With our [normal] size of blow molding equipment, you get [a large order] for big

equipment ... and then you go four months and you don’t get another order in the meantime. So we get feast or famine,” he said. “We’ve been constantly looking for that regular drumbeat of business opportunity to get something consistent in here and just keep that baseline the same.”

Hodge said R&B initially will focus on selling extruders in the Midwest. R&B wants to maintain in extruders what Hodge called “strength in service.” All 18 shop-floor employees travel for service at customer plants.

R&B’s core business remains extrusion blow molding machines for polyethylene bottles for consumer products such as detergent, shampoo and motor oil. Visitors to R&B’s NPE booth can see a control tower with Siemens and Allen-Bradley controllers on opposite sides. Each controller will run two parison heads.

R&B officials have been pushing Siemens and A-B programmable logic controls instead of dedicated-motion control cards to run functions of the proportional hydraulics on blow molding machines. The controls now manage a variety of motions in parison, clamp and blow pin movement.

LaGanke said R&B has patented “electronic camming,” the use of controllers instead of mechanical means to coordinate machine motions in the blow molding machines. That allows the large machines to run movements simultaneously, reducing



Al Hodge of R&B Plastics Machinery LLC stands next to one of the firm’s new Max single-screw extruders inside R&B’s Saline, Mich. headquarters.

Plastics News photo by Bill Bregar

cycle times.

“What’s really driving us is consumer packaging. Right now, consumer detergent packaging and liquid container packaging in particular, is actually very strong,” Hodge said.

The changes are driving some new business at R&B. During a plant tour in Saline, Hodge pointed to a giant Rotary 8 indexing-wheel blow molding machine under construction.

In another part of the plant, employees were rebuilding old standard-wheel machines from another manufacturer. “It’s translating right now in sales of molds, and it’s translating in the rebuild and service orders,” Hodge said. “It’s also generating some machine orders.”