



Harbec honored for sustainability

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PLASTICS NEWS STAFF

ONTARIO, N.Y. (March 15, 1:15 p.m. ET) -- In the beginning, Harbec Inc.'s journey to being green paralleled Kermit's own pigment-specific lament -- it wasn't easy. Now, the company is being awarded for its efforts.

In May, Harbec will be honored with a 2012 Manufacturing Leadership 100 Award in Sustainability, acknowledgment that the company's commitment to incorporate energy efficiency and cutting carbon emissions has proven fruitful.

"Anytime you get recognition or an award, it's a confirmation that you're going in the right direction," said Bob Bechtold, president of Harbec. "It encourages other team members to get excited about it, committed to it and see value in it."

The Ontario, N.Y.-based company's in-house capabilities include rapid prototyping, mold making, injection molding, secondary operations and engineering support.

Harbec was nominated for the award by Epicor for a project in which they utilized an energy management program called Carbon Connect. In the same way most companies use financial accounting software, Carbon Connect gives companies the capability to operate real-time managing, tracking and reporting of energy and resource usage, allowing transparency and demonstrating ROI.

Harbec will be one of the first companies in the U.S. to earn the ISO 50001 certification, the first international energy management standard.

After years of incorporating green and sustainable practices in his personal life, Bechtold decided to incorporate sustainability into his business. Before "green" and "sustainable" became buzz words, Bechtold faced some resistance.

"The big mistake I made at first was talking about things for the sake of the environment or the future. I was trying to develop solutions that apply to manufacturing using just the environmental rationale."

Inadvertently, Bechtold said he was establishing himself as a "burned out hippie or Birkenstocker," and was turned down by 30 banks for financing. So he went underground for a few months to create a more appealing approach. This time, he focused on the other "e": economics.

"I made the mistake at the beginning of talking green and I still don't lead with green now. There are very strong economic reasons to be sustainable."

One economic advantage that continues to pay off is a 250kW wind turbine located just outside the plant since 2002. The turbine has proven so successful, the company is working on a second turbine at 850kW that should be in working mode by this summer. Their twenty-five microturbine heat and power plant generates enough electricity and thermal to meet the heating and cooling requirements of the facility.

Bechtold also pointed out that the costs of energy and water will always be more than they are today. Because of that constant price escalation, it behooves any business to examine their energy consumption.

While Bechtold acknowledges that sustainability is a trend, he sees long-term benefits of the movement through educating consumers about accountability beyond the "soft and flowery" catchphrases.

"The fact that the consumer is becoming aware means they'll demand real, quantifiable stuff behind it. They're

creating an environment that will demand metrics and people will have the choice to make the most powerful statement: their purchase.”

In addition to the new wind turbine, Harbec is refreshing its combined heat and power plant, looking into upgrades for worn out and tired equipment. They're also working to electrically and thermally connect neighboring businesses to aid in supplying low cost, green energy.

The company's ultimate goal is to have no carbon footprint by 2013.

Manufacturing Executive, a global community for manufacturing leadership, produces the Manufacturing Leadership Summit and ML100 Award program. Harbec will receive its award on the final day of the summit, to be held April 29 – May 2 in Palm Beach, Flo. The awards honor individuals in four categories: next-generational leadership and culture, advocacy, manufacturing entrepreneur and turnaround.

Organizations are honored in seven categories, including innovative enterprise, global value chain, new workforce, operational excellence, game-changing technologies and information leadership in addition to sustainability. Other companies that stand out for their sustainability efforts include BMW AG, Columbia Manufacturing, Institute for Sustainable Communities, Lexmark International Inc., Pentair Inc. and Nalco Co.

Criteria for the sustainability award include implementing “manufacturing processes that are non-polluting, conserve energy and natural resources, and are economically sound and safe for employees, communities and consumers,” according to the ML100 awards website.

Harbec also won the 2011 “MEP Excellence in Sustainability Award” from the National Institute of Standards and Technology, announced in May of last year.

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