

WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT?



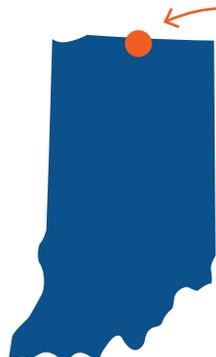
Heather Lee Meixel
President and owner,
Bamar Plastics Inc.



A monthly series about executive insights by Brennan Lafferty, *Plastics News* publisher. Invite Brennan to visit with you by emailing him at blafferty@crain.com.

See video of *Plastics News'* interview with Heather Lee Meixel at: www.plasticsnews.com/wkyuan

JUST THE FACTS: BAMER PLASTICS INC.



COMPANY HEADQUARTERS:
South Bend, Ind.

YEAR ESTABLISHED:
1978

NUMBER OF INJECTION MOLDING MACHINES:
24

ANNUAL SALES:
\$2.2 MILLION



TOTAL EMPLOYMENT:
27



MAIN MARKETS:
Automotive

MAIN CUSTOMERS:
Crane, Smart Temps

Modernizing the business

Second-generation owner looks to grow Bamar Plastics

By Brennan Lafferty
Plastics News Publisher

South Bend, Ind. — It would be a mistake to judge Bamar Plastics Inc. by its exterior.

Sure, the neighborhood appears a little rough and the signage to the building has faded. But inside, visitors — and there's been plenty of late — will find a fiercely loyal employee base and an injection molder itchin' to grow.

Meet President Heather Lee Meixel. The 47-year-old took over just seven months ago and will soon be the sole owner nearly two years after her father and company founder, Barry Lee, passed away from natural causes. Lee Meixel has experience in industrial sales and an easy smile, which allows her to fit in with her friendly and long-tenured staff.

"Some of the stuff Dad's left with me, first and foremost, is to take care of people who work here. He handpicked everyone that's here. Just about everybody's been here between two decades and three-and-a-half decades. Keeping people is not a problem," said Lee Meixel, a Purdue graduate who majored in economics thinking that an attorney's life was in her future.

Bamar has 27 employees and \$2.2 million in sales mainly from the automotive sector. "Just about every make and model of a car has one of our parts in it," she said.

While Lee Meixel would like to increase the amount of business Bamar



Heather Lee Meixel, owner and president of Bamar Plastics Inc., is looking to diversify and grow the company's automotive, defense and assembly business.

generates in the auto sector, she is eager to diversify and grow its defense and assembly business. Bamar actually got its start in electronics with Barry Lee's invention of two plastic bases that fit on the back of cathode ray tubes.

In the last year, Lee Meixel has walked consultants and potential partners through Bamar looking for an edge and an outsider's perspective. "We're already doing many good

things. But I like to get other people's ideas," she said.

To modernize Bamar and, in turn, land more business, Lee Meixel knew she needed to invest in the company. She's started with a 180-ton Engel press (\$250,000), new water chillers and new desktops for office staff. All told, Bamar spent \$500,000. Lee Meixel hopes to add 18 more presses in the next five years to replace the compa-

See **Bamar**, Page 9

Pellet abuse is a thing of the past

NEW

With **R-PRO™**, Conair's unique, patent-pending, **Resin-Protection Conveying System**, you can eliminate pellet fracturing, angel hair, dust, pipe wear and other problems associated with traditional dilute-phase conveying. R-PRO moves pellets at slow speeds to protect your resin **without limiting throughput**. It's cost competitive and can be retrofit to existing systems. Protect your resin from abuse.

Visit conairgroup.com/protect.



WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT?

Heather Lee Meixel
President and owner,
Bamar Plastics Inc.

LIGHTNING ROUND

- 1 **Age?** 47
- 2 **Family?** Married with two kids (17- and 15-year-old girls).
- 3 **What do you do for fun?** Watch basketball, read, go to the gym.
- 4 **If you could travel in time to witness one event ...** Meet my future grandkids.
- 5 **Worst job?** Selling software. It was horrible.
- 6 **Favorite place to travel for fun?** Somewhere tropical to scuba dive.
- 7 **Most influential person growing up?** Mom and Dad.
- 8 **Book on your nightstand?** "New sales. Simplified." By Mike Weinberg.



iStock photos

Bamar

Continued from Page 8

ny's Boy presses, some of which date to 1985.

Capital expenditures are only the beginning. Bamar has hired a marketing firm to remake the website and generate inbound phone calls. The funding came through a grant from the University of Michigan. Local school districts will be supplying a couple of interns this summer. Bamar hosted 30 students on National Manufacturing Day, too, with six of the kids scheduled to return at their own request for an extended look at industrial careers.

But Lee Meixel is most excited about Bamar's new apprentice program. Bamar will work with Ivy Tech and WorkOne to educate and train a certified apprentice over the next four years, all funded by Bamar.

"We are definitely investing in the education. We are putting our money where our mouth is as far as building a qualified workforce," she said, adding

that this particular apprenticeship is for industrial maintenance technician and could pay \$65,000 once the candidate comes through the program.

Bamar is only running at 30 percent capacity, running three shifts five days per week, including some lights out manufacturing. The new boss knows Bamar can generate \$5 million in sales if it can run 24/7 every day.

"The communication flow is amazing. Any customer that wants to can talk to anyone on staff — inspector, press operator, vice president. It doesn't matter. We're very open. It makes us super accessible. Problems get solved very quickly," she said.

Some business may come when Bamar becomes certified as a minority supplier, specifically a woman-owned business. Lee Meixel has Bamar in the process of certification by the state of Indiana's Minority and Women's Business Enterprises and the federal Women's Business Enterprise National Council.

How does that generate busi-

ness?

"Hopefully, being certified will be a tie breaker in certain situations. There are some companies that are mandated to employ supplier diversity. Those will be doors we get in. Once you're on the other side, you have to bring the value as well. So, we've got that."

Anything keeping Lee Meixel up at night?

"What keeps me up at night is making decisions that sustain Bamar. I want to see Bamar Plastics thrive into the future. ... Making sure the company is here for the people who work here. That's primarily our focus."

And what would Barry Lee say if he were to sit down with his daughter today? "Keep it up," Lee Meixel said. "He'd probably say something like, 'I can't believe it. I'm so happy.'"

"We've had a couple of jobs fall out of the sky. Somebody driving by the building to make sure we're still open and calling us to give us work. Those aren't leads you get every day. So I kind of think he may have had something to do with that, too."

Plastics Exchange



PLASTICS FINANCIAL SUMMIT
INVESTING IN THE FUTURE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS | JUNE 15-16, 2016



CALL FOR PAPERS

Share the Stage
with Keynote Speaker:



Christopher Kearney
Central Region Managing Partner
Tatum US

To Submit Presentations, Contact *Plastics News* Conference Director Joe Pryweller at jpryweller@crain.com or 330.212.3731.

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!
LEARN MORE @ www.plasticsnews.com/financialsummit

PLATINUM SPONSOR:
P|M|C|F
MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

PADFOLIO SPONSOR:
BMO Harris Bank

SHOW GUIDE SPONSOR:
SRR
SOLUTIONS GROUP

EVENT COMMERCIAL SPONSOR:
Mueller Prost
CPAs - Business Advisors

DISPLAY SPONSOR:
GROSEXECUTIVE RECRUITERS

PARTNERS:
fei
Manufacturing International

MAPP

Don't just recycle - Create value!



MAS
FDA PROCESS APPROVED!
THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING
GET DETAILS!

EXTRUSION AND RE-COMPOUNDING SYSTEMS

- Conical, co-rotational twin screw systems
- Superior homogenization
- Low melt temperatures
- Low energy consumption

COMPLEMENTARY SYSTEMS



WATERLESS DRY CLEANING LINES



CONTINUOUS MELT FILTRATION UNITS



VACUUM PYROLYSIS OVENS

MAS 

1.877.801.3232 sales@mas-america.com www.mas-america.com

NEW **PlasticsNews.com** WEB POLL QUESTION

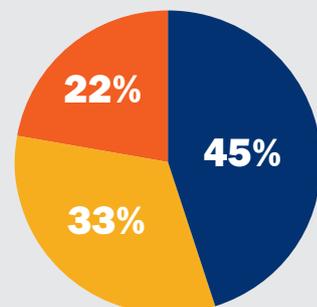
► Is your company planning on sending staff to the K Show?

- Yes, we go every time
- Yes, this is the first time we're going
- No, but we never go
- No, we are skipping this year

RECENT POLL RESULTS

► Are low oil prices good for your business?

- Yes, they're good
- No, we're hurt when oil prices drop
- Makes no difference



Total votes: 58 Poll date: Feb.2