Target the right talent with employer branding

With the Plastics Industry Career Center, building and maintaining a strong employer brand among active and passive job seekers is simple. Our Featured Employer Advertising and Digital Job Videos are your time to shine — providing the perfect platform to demonstrate what sets you apart from other organizations competing for the same talent.
PLASTICS Connects

The new Plastics Industry Association mobile app allows you to stay connected to the plastics industry from anywhere. Download the app today and explore!

![Download on the App Store](https://www.plasticsindustry.org)

![Get it on Google Play](https://www.plasticsindustry.org)

**AWESOME FEATURES**

**Supply Chain**
- Get information about the supply chain and links to our groups and programs working to address the industry’s interests.
- Learn more about our member companies and how they are impacting the plastics industry.

**Member Benefits**
- Discover the many benefits available to your company by becoming a PLASTICS member. Learn more about how you can get involved directly and personally.
- Connect and join to get access to exclusive offers.

**Users can participate in interactive forums and create their own around key areas of interest to the plastics industry.**

**View upcoming PLASTICS events, toggle between a list view or calendar view and manage your own schedule.**

**Explore full profile information about all registered app users and send messages to other users to make connections.**

**Link to free content reports and industry data to support your business needs and objectives.**

PLASTICSINDUSTRY.ORG
Brad Crocker, CEO of Epsilyte, is passionate about PLASTICS' many benefits. From the very beginning of life, plastics provide vital support.
a letter from our CEO

The Plastics Industry Association represents the entire plastics supply chain.

We advocate for innovation, jobs and growth. We communicate the value of plastics to the press and public. We help members to improve safety and protect the environment.

We and our members work hard to ensure billions of people across the world continue to enjoy the benefits of the world’s most advanced material.

PLASTICS Magazine is where members and staff share their unique stories.

In this issue, Brad Crocker of Epsilyte describes how PLASTICS’ regulatory and other assistance can help small and medium-sized companies supplement their in-house capabilities.

In our cover story, you’ll learn from more members about Future Leaders in Plastics, a networking and mentoring program helping young professionals to sharpen their skills and build valuable industry connections.

A skilled workforce is an important issue to PLASTICS members, one of many our Government Affairs team discusses with elected leaders. In this issue, you’ll discover how you too can participate in those conversations.

Speaking of communication, inside you’ll also find tips on how to counteract misconceptions about plastic, including disposable products.

In fact, an entire universe of toys and games would be impossible without plastic. PLASTICS Magazine features a famous example.

We hope you enjoy this Spring issue, just one of the ways PLASTICS is spreading the good news about our industry and the people who support it.

Tony Radoszewski
President & Chief Executive Officer

Have a great story to tell? Share it with us at magazine@plasticsindustry.org
Why become a PLASTICS member? PLASTICS is made up of dedicated individuals who are not supporting the plastic industry out of obligation, but rather their belief that plastic technologies save lives, save energy, enable societal progress and can fully comply with the recycling hierarchy to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover post-use plastic.

Our company is one of North America's largest producers of expandable polystyrene, primarily marketing products for packaging, construction and infrastructure applications. Epsilyte products assure safe handling and delivery of perishable items in the global food supply chain, as well as cost-effective temperature control for cold chain packaging used to ship critical medical supplies and vaccines worldwide. Our products are also critical in the production of building insulation with high thermal resistance that conserves energy and provides for comfortable work and living spaces.

All that said, ensuring top quartile Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) performance is our license to operate.

Brad Crocker is President and CEO of Epsilyte LLC. One of his first moves after taking the reins of the company in 2020 was to make it a PLASTICS member.
Due to our relative size and scope versus other petrochemical participants, we are very dependent on our in-house resources using third-party support to stay abreast of regulation changes, safety best practices, environmental reporting and control improvements, and to act as a sounding board in the everchanging EHS landscape.

We are excited to work with the knowledgeable experts of the PLASTICS EHS+ team to augment our own capabilities and knowledge, as we constantly work to improve our EHS performance. With PLASTICS, we expect to achieve our number one goal of ensuring every employee, contractor and stakeholder throughout Epsilyte is able to return home every day in better shape than when they arrived.

With sustainability having grown in importance over the last decade, we greatly appreciate that PLASTICS is making significant investments and great strides in telling the right, accurate story about our industry and products. We work every day to make sure our products and services are recognized as not only cost-effective, consistent and high-performance customer solutions, but also sustainable in design, use and end-of-life. PLASTICS is committed to using scientific fact in an easily understood, commonsense way to persuasively communicate the societal benefits made possible by plastic products and technology.

Delivering the right sustainability message requires skilled, educated, dedicated and connected advocates to interact with both governmental and non-governmental organizations. The PLASTICS advocacy group is made up of individuals who are excited to interact with and persuade influencers regardless of their positions and beliefs. PLASTICS is well-positioned at both the federal and state levels to develop the right contacts and customized messaging that advance our common agenda.

As is the case for many smaller companies, we rely heavily on industry associations to meet our advocacy needs. Epsilyte doesn’t have the resources to understand, let alone address, all the initiatives taking place at state, municipal and local levels, so we work with PLASTICS to stay abreast of the latest trends and advocacy efforts. Over the past several years, prior to taking over at Epsilyte, I’ve personally worked side-by-side with PLASTICS to defeat or delay plastic bans in critical states including Florida, Connecticut and Oregon.

I’ve been in the plastics industry and connected with PLASTICS for almost 10 years and remain impressed with the eagerness of their people to work with me and my team to not only address our needs but to also find ways of adding value in the relationship. As Epsilyte works to carve out its place in the industry, stand up and develop into an independent, autonomous and profitable company within the plastics space, joining PLASTICS seems like one of the easiest decisions I’ll have to make.

Brad Crocker, President and CEO of Epsilyte LLC
Plastics have changed life for the better. That's right. Make a difference in the world. And let's not forget about letting young people know they can actually help the environment from inside the plastics industry.

The plastics industry offers a wide range of interesting work, growth potential and opportunities. At PLASTICS we represent an entire world of companies that manufacture and distribute equipment, materials and products that help make life safer and easier. From medical practices to manufacturing. Those are just a few of the things plastics make possible. Our industry is a place where we have play active roles in addressing such issues and having a positive impact on the environment. We believe environmentally aware young people can contribute to the up-and-coming.

As the outgoing chair of FLiP, now I say just one word to you…just one word…FLiP. I had the privilege to meet monthly with HR managers, sales leaders, company presidents, inventors, scientists, marketing professionals and otherFLiP professionals position themselves for the future leaders in plastics…there's a great future in plastics.

I had the privilege to meet monthly with HR managers, sales leaders, company presidents, inventors, scientists, marketing professionals and other professionals position themselves for the future leaders in plastics…there's a great future in plastics.

To the Future
If you’re in the plastics industry, odds are good that someone, somewhere along the way, has quoted The Graduate to you. You know the scene. Mr. McGuire pulls Dustin Hoffman’s character aside at a party, fixes the newly minted graduate with eyes full of confident wisdom and says, “I want to say just one word to you...just one word...plastics...there’s a great future in plastics.”

It was intended as a laugh line. But really, what’s so funny? As far as we’re concerned, Mr. McGuire was correct back in 1967 and he still is today. The plastics industry has a lot to offer young people looking for career choices that offer interesting work, growth potential and an opportunity to make a difference in the world.

That’s right. Make a difference in the world.

In a day and age when many young people are looking for careers that make them feel good about the work they do, the plastics industry offers a wide range of opportunities. At PLASTICS we represent an entire world of companies that manufacture and distribute equipment, materials and products that help make life safer, healthier, more convenient and less expensive for consumers.

“Plastics have changed life for the better in more ways than you can count, all around the world,” says PLASTICS CEO, Tony Radoszewski. “Preserving food. Enabling safe medical practices. Revolutionizing manufacturing. Those are just a few of the things plastics make possible. Our industry is a great place for young people to make an important contribution to society, while earning an excellent living, as well.”

And let’s not forget about letting young people know they can actually help the environment from inside the plastics industry.

In a 2018 United Nations Foundation poll, 39% of young American adults listed environmental issues as a top-three concern for the U.S. government. Other research points to similar attitudes worldwide, indicating companies courting young workers may do well to emphasize their commitment to the environment.

While certain activists might disagree, the plastics industry is a place where environmentally aware young people can play active roles in addressing such issues and having a positive impact on Planet Earth.

The amount of effort the industry is putting into limiting, recovering and reusing plastic waste is huge. Beginning a career in plastics is a fabulous opportunity to be part of the solution-finding process when it comes to making sure the world can cleanly manufacture, proactively recycle/reuse and safely dispose of the amazing materials produced by plastics companies.
Developing young talent

At PLASTICS, we have an entire organization dedicated to helping our younger professionals position themselves for a bright and successful future in the industry. It's called Future Leaders in Plastics (FLiP), and it was formed as a place for plastics professionals under the age of 40 to socialize within the industry, develop contacts, access continuing improvement resources and contribute to the overall health of the industry as they prepare lead it into the future.

Shannon Stickler, Market Strategy Manager with flexible and specialty rigid packaging manufacturer Printpack, has been with FLiP from the beginning. “The idea for FLiP was generated in 2013 during an Industry Affairs staff meeting as an opportunity to further engage the next generation in PLASTICS and the plastics industry,” she recalls. “Member companies were asked to nominate high-potential young professionals from their companies to participate in an initial brainstorm. I was honored with a place in that group. Since then, we have created an executive board, numerous task groups and have continued to grow.”

As the outgoing chair of FLiP, now embarking on the post-FLiP chapter of her career, Shannon feels very well prepared for the future. “FLiP has provided me an opportunity to further engage in the industry,” she says. “I have developed not only a more comprehensive knowledge base of the industry but have also developed connections that have grown into friendships.”

By focusing on the under-40 age range, FLiP has become a community in which members grow to positions in which they can then help the up-and-coming.

“Within FLiP we have HR managers, sales leaders, company presidents, inventors, scientists, marketing professionals and more,” says FLiP vice chairman Jon Smalling of SEPRO America. “We’re all working together for the single goal of helping each other succeed. Those involved with FLiP, I believe, gain a sense of responsibility and empowerment through working together within our industry.”

Jon, a regional sales manager, goes on to describe the actual experience of benefiting from someone who was willing to share their own lessons learned. “I had the privilege to meet monthly with a business leader and we quickly connected,” he says. “I came to realize we have many of the same struggles and opportunities in our daily lives. It was great to connect with someone who took an interest in me and my goals.”

The relationship-building benefits of FLiP can’t be overstated. Brian Walsh, CEO at Meadoworks, thinks they’re crucial to filling what he sees as a gap in the industry. “We’re not a big networking industry,” Walsh says. “You don’t tend to see it much in the manufacturing segment. In other
professional groups—accounting, lending, legal—there’s a lot of different networking available. You find people who are constantly looking to build their networks in those areas. If our younger professionals can develop a network of people inside our industry, those relationships can potentially pay dividends in the future."

**Networking and so much more**

Making connections that can help build careers is an important part of what FLiP provides, but professional development opportunities are also key to the FLiP mission. The Continuing Education Task Group facilitates guest speakers on topics such as leadership development, networking, trade show preparation and more. There is also a book club in which members read and discuss works that focus on personal growth and leadership development. Recently, club members read *The War of Art* by Steven Pressfield, a book concerned with helping people express their creativity. They then discussed it via Zoom.

That choice of *The War of Art* as a focus for the book club demonstrates the kind of forward-thinking that makes FLiP a great resource. Experts will tell you that creativity isn’t just for people who make paintings, write novels or compose music. Creativity is at the heart of problem-solving, a skill that is essential to success in the plastics industry; recognizing that creativity in oneself and expressing it properly are equally important to an individual’s success. Pressfield, in *The War of Art*, places great emphasis on the concept of overcoming "resistance" which he has described as such things as self-doubt, vanity, fear and self-sabotage.

The book club was one of the major draws of the group for Kylee Carbone, a human resources and community outreach specialist at Westminster Tool. This year, she took over as chair of the Continuing Education Task Group. “The book club has good traction, and I’d like to grow it,” she says. "It's an investment with

---

**A FEW PRACTICAL FLiP TIPS**

Here are some thoughts on what company leaders can do to take advantage of FLiP

1. **IDENTIFY** a few promising young professionals within your company and have a conversation with them on their career goals. Don’t send an email. Pick up the phone and call them.

2. **ASK** people about their goals. You’ll find that “fulfillment” for them isn’t always about making money. Growing a career, building a network, helping others, making new friends and volunteering time that makes a positive impact are also important. FLiP delivers on all of those.

3. **SUPPORT** their interest in FLiP and the fact that they will need to devote time to the organization. Then reinforce that support consistently.

---

*Learn more about FLiP membership by contacting flip@plasticsindustry.org*
great ROI. You’re talking about buying a book and taking people away from their jobs for an hour every other month. That’s pretty minimal. It’s a built-in benefit of your PLASTICS membership.”

Kylee’s overall goal for the Continuing Education Task Force is to increase interaction among members and draw members from a wider range of companies. Her plan includes enhancing FLiP’s guest speaker series to offer a greater variety of subject matter from an expanded roster of speakers. The hope is that FLiP’s Continuing Education Task Force can be of help to more and more plastics professionals throughout the supply chain. For instance, Kylee sees it as an opportunity for bringing together professionals on and off the shop floor.

“I am in constant awe of people with workshop-floor skills,” Kylee says, “and I’m glad to be in a position where I can support them. For instance, I can’t run an EDM [electrical discharge machine] but I can help the people who do interact better with others and build productive relationships. FLiP isn’t just for people at a desk job. It’s a great opportunity for an operator or tool maker to learn, and teach, as well.”

The future is now

The people who have founded and grown FLiP want PLASTICS member companies to focus on the word “Future” in their name and realize that the group is about a lot more than just a social outlet for young people. “FLiP provides the young professionals in PLASTICS access to and knowledge of resources, networking and leadership experience,” says founding member, Shannon Stickler. “Investing in the growth of FLiP members expands the value of PLASTICS membership for the individual and their company.”

Jon Smalling recommends that company leaders take a very proactive approach to realizing that value. “If you are a leader of your company, I believe it is your duty to not only encourage younger employees to join FLiP but to give them permission to become a leader within FLiP.” While it can seem on one level to be something extracurricular that takes an employee’s focus away from his or her job, Jon says the opposite is actually the case. “Joining FLiP can help young professionals stay motivated in reaching their personal, professional and industry goals. Employees that are fulfilled and motivated stay with companies that provide fulfillment and motivation.”

The new chairman of FLiP, Jeremy Kaluzna of Meadoworks, echoes and amplifies Smalling’s sense of urgency. “Training, cultivating, and sustaining younger talent in the industry workforce is a mission-critical objective in preserving the industry,” he says, “and is squarely at the core of FLiP’s mission.”

Jeremy is an excellent example of someone who works for a company that understands the value of the time he needs to invest in FLiP, because Meadoworks has witnessed and assisted many customers in managing the effects of not planning for the future through its business brokerage, appraisal and auction services.

“The industry is at a turning point and there has been a lack of succession planning for the next generation,” says Jeremy. “At Meadoworks, we work regularly with business owners and stakeholders within the plastics industry to sell businesses and assets, transitioning them to the next generation. While much of this disposition activity is due to normal ebbs and flows of the business cycle, a significant portion is resultant from an organization not planning beyond the retirement of its leadership.”

Brian Walsh, Jeremy’s CEO at Meadoworks, is a big believer in such planning for the future and fully supports the time and effort Jeremy puts into FLiP. “Part of that planning process,” he says, “is being able to identify people that have a passion for the industry and want to take things to the next level. From Jeremy’s perspective, he’s a strong leader and has really embraced the goals of FLiP. We think it’s a good idea. If you’re not engaged, it’s a problem.”

Another aspect of planning for the next generation is to reach out early. Kylee Carbone benefited from the fact that Westminster Tool makes a practice of community outreach, and she happily continues that tradition. “Our local elementary schools have a Maker’s Space program that we support by having them visit our facility and attending STEM nights at the school. We’re helping
to educate them on a whole different career path."

Kylee’s right. It’s never too soon to reach out. Let elementary and high schools in your area know that your company exists and that you want to contribute to the education of students. Give young people who are beginning to think about their futures an inside look at an industry they may not otherwise consider as a home for their interests. Offer field trips and career day speakers who can answer questions and even dispel misconceptions students may have developed due to misrepresentations of plastics in popular culture. This is also an excellent opportunity to let young people know that careers in plastics aren’t like the sometimes terrifying manufacturing jobs they learned about when studying the Industrial Revolution; they’re high-tech and...well...cool.

FLiP this article onto someone’s desk

Help PLASTICS spread the word about FLiP. Hand someone a copy of this magazine. Photocopy or scan the article and circulate it. Link it on your company website. Let your people know that FLiP exists and that you want them to learn more about it.

There’s no time like the present to start building the future. Reach out to your younger team members and make an effort to help them develop a true passion for the mission of plastics in the world. "You have to have people engaged who are going to start running your company," Meadoworks’ Brian Walsh says, adding, "or who are running it right now," in reference to Jeremy Kaluzna, FLiP’s chair, who is Brian’s COO.

Not only will you be doing your bottom line a long-term favor, you’ll also show your employees you care enough about their success to be a PLASTICS member and give them access to resources like FLiP, where they’ll meet peers with inspiring attitudes.

People like Jon Smalling, who says, “I believe the best days are ahead of us. The plastics industry is an industry that provides solutions to the world’s greatest problems. FLiP wants to play a role in your efforts of attracting and keeping the best talent in the world. We are excited about partnering with you in the future.”
There’s no shortage of discussion these days on the subject of recruiting and retaining the younger generation of employees entering the workforce, especially when it comes to STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Relying as we do on such skills in the plastics industry, appealing to that generation is becoming increasingly important.

If there were an exact STEM-proven formula for getting this job done, people wouldn’t be asking questions about it all the time, but there are some best-practices recommended to companies courting younger workers.

**Provide more than a booth at career and job fairs**
Show up with more than a smile, a pile of brochures and some logo swag. Be ready to offer mentoring opportunities. Get contact information for promising candidates and then follow through on connecting them with someone who can give them further insights. Be especially aware about providing young women with other women to speak with in the industry. A lack of female role models for STEM careers is often cited as a roadblock to recruiting among women.

**Get the good ones in the door**
Don’t lose someone you’re sure will be a first-class asset simply because he or she hasn’t graduated college yet. Start building a connection with the industry and your company right away with paid internships or co-op employment in which the candidate goes to school part-time and works part-time. And when you have them with you, put them on projects with experienced
professionals who can help strengthen and stretch those technical skills. Potential, future full-time employees will feel valued, and they will be even more ready to do the jobs you need them to do when they graduate.

**Don't just talk...listen**

There’s a scene in the movie Good Will Hunting where the main character talks about not wanting to put his math genius to work for the government because he is suspicious of the government’s motives. Sure, it’s just a movie, but it’s a great reminder that technically inclined people can also be people of deep feeling and conscience. One of the most important things to the younger generation of employees these days is to work with a company they feel shares their values. Listen to the aspirations of young people and ask questions. Draw out what they are passionate about and point out how their outlook intersects with that of your company. This can be a great opportunity to speak about the efforts our industry is making to curb waste, increase recovery and improve recycling. The idea of being part of the solution to a problem they have been told by others is insurmountable can be very appealing to a young person who wants a sense of purpose in his or her job—especially a skilled technician or engineer who will have a hands-on role in making it happen.

**Get your employees involved**

Encourage your existing workforce to become passionate about building your company’s future by getting involved in recruitment and onboarding. Build a diverse, multi-disciplinary team of people who can each dedicate a bit of time to outreach through field trips, school visits,
career days, job fairs, in-house mentorship and the like. Create a welcoming and collaborative environment that lets young people know they’re viewed as essential to seeing your company thrive in the long term.

**Show your community spirit**

It can’t be emphasized enough that our industry needs to do everything possible to counter the unfair accusation that we are an enemy to the environment and public health. Become involved in supporting community charities, local schools and civic issues that are important to your community and be sure to make those activities known to potential employees. Showing that your entire staff is dedicated to giving time to such efforts is also important to interesting purpose-driven young candidates.

**Use interviews to your advantage**

Don’t just walk new candidates into HR and table-interview them. Show them around your facility. Introduce them to people inside and outside their field of expertise and let that happen in actual workspaces rather than a conference room. Let candidates see the diversity of your workforce and the multifaceted character of what your company does. There is “sizing up” happening on both sides of an interview, so it’s in your best interest to make the experience compelling.

**Tell the whole story**

We started this article with a focus on technical talent, but much of it applies across the board when reaching out to today’s younger jobseekers and future jobseekers. From administrative staff to your most specialized engineer, it will be important to provide the sense that your company does meaningful work, that you care about employee quality of life and that your company feels a sense of responsibility to the larger community.

Kylee Carbone, human resources and community outreach specialist at Westminster Tool, says that educating your broader workforce starts before you even hire someone. “When I was in school as a business major, no one said ‘Check out your local manufacturing company for a job.’ We get caught up in looking for shop floor people, but we need the rest of the workforce too.”

A true ambassador for the plastics industry, Kylee is very vocal about extolling the virtues of a career in manufacturing. “I do a lot of talking to elementary schools, high schools and colleges about what a career in manufacturing looks like. Manufacturing is not dark, dirty, dangerous. It’s a high-tech career track. Manufacturing is a great opportunity for jobseekers.”
The Plastics Industry Association (PLASTICS) is an American National Standards Institute (ANSI)-accredited standards developer, working to ensure all plastics machinery is safely built to standard to protect our industry’s most valuable resource: our people. To contribute your expertise, as a member of a PLASTICS technical committee improving both safety and productivity, email Director of Industry Standards Jennifer Jones at jjones@plasticsindustry.org. Make your voice heard.

Why choose PLASTICS standards?

- Become a voting member with influence over industry standards
- Lead a technical committee dedicated to your business
- Gain a competitive edge in the marketplace
- Improve efficiency in sectors from food and healthcare, to home goods and sustainability

GET YOUR COPY TODAY: PLASTICSINDUSTRY.ORG/STANDARDS
feature story
Let’s take a look at the most fundamental part of society—the family. From the very beginning of family life plastics are an essential part of making life more livable in both practical and economic terms.

To hear environmental activists tell it, the plastics industry is a danger to society. Just across the border, in Canada, the government is actually in the process of declaring plastics toxic. That is, to put it plainly, absurd.

Every day, plastics preserve life and health throughout society. In fact, we even put plastics into our bodies, on purpose. From stents used in heart surgery, to pacemakers, artificial joints and more, plastics are supporting and preserving the human body.

Let’s take a look at the most fundamental part of society—the family. From the very beginning of family life plastics are an essential part of making life more livable in both practical and economic terms.

Young parents and parents-to-be don’t have to spend much time searching the internet to find people trying to strike fear into their hearts about the supposed dangers of plastics. But another simple internet search for newborn necessities immediately puts all that fearmongering into question.

We took a look around at websites for new parents. Here’s just some of what we found (in alphabetical order):
**Baby Carrier:** Sure, there's a lot of cloth involved in making these, but take a look at the latches you’ll be relying on to secure that carrier around your shoulders. You guessed it—plastic.

**Baby Formula/Food:** Whatever form you purchase it in, there is most likely plastic involved in the packaging that keeps it fresh and keeps the price down by making shipping less expensive.

**Baby Monitor:** Like all consumer electronics, these rely a lot on plastic to keep them light and to keep the electronics safely insulated.

**Babyproofing Gear:** Even a small apartment can seem like a minefield of baby dangers. Plastics are essential to baby gates for stairwells, safety latches for cabinets/drawers/toilets, covers for electrical outlets, bumpers for fireplaces and corner guards for low tables. Not only do plastics make these products reliably secure, plastic also means no metal that might snag baby’s skin or harm your home surfaces.

**Breastfeeding Gear:** Even if you aren't using formula, you may not always find yourself in a breastfeeding-friendly environment. The equipment you'll need to pump and store breast milk relies heavily on plastics that provide a comfortable experience for Mom and a fresh supply of milk for Baby.

**Diapering:** Naysayers can say what they will about plastics-based disposable diapers, but generations of parents have now relied on them to make diapering an easier process in today’s mobile and more fast-paced world. Not to mention that disposables have been found to keep “deposits” better contained than cloth diapers, preventing children from dangerous hand contact with their waste. That’s an especially big plus for daycare providers concerned about preventing infections among the children under their care.

**Feeding Bottles:** Even though some people are hearkening back to glass feeding bottles today, most baby bottles are still plastic. Plastics have helped make bottle time exceptionally convenient for both parents and babies, while opening up an entire world of design that has made it possible for babies to take in less air while feeding, which means less gas and stomach upset. Plastic being lighter than glass, plastic feeding bottles also mean less weight to carry when the family is on the go.

**Health/Hygiene Essentials:** Nobody wants a glass mercury thermometer anywhere near their child, these days. So, it’s a safe bet that most parents will be using a digital thermometer with plastic casing. They’ll also be relying on various OTC medicines and equipment (e.g., nasal aspirator, nose drops, infant acetaminophen) that are either made from or packaged in plastics.
It's safe to say that plastics play a huge role in making it easier, safer and more economically viable for people to start families in the contemporary world. And so far, we've only addressed infants and toddlers. First-time parents can also look forward to researching the best safety helmets for biking and skateboarding, along with sports equipment and whatever gear other hobbies and interests require.

Whatever the contemporary family needs, the plastics industry will surely be playing a role in making sure they get it.

Infant Feeding Spoons/ Bowls: Plastics remove the risk of dropping and shattering a glass bowl near your baby. Plastic spoons are lighter, can be shaped to be more mouth-friendly and easier for little ones to learn how to hold. (Also easier on Mom or Dad’s nose should Baby decide she likes to swing it around!)

Insulated Cooler/Carrier: Plastics make such insulation possible, adding to the freshness of formula and bottled breast milk.

Rocking Chair/Glider: These are recommended as a comfortable way for parents to sit and rock with their children. There's a good deal of wood and metal in these, but the upholstery is very likely polyester.

Toys: From rattles to teething toys, plastics keep babies calm, contented and happy.

Car Seat: The car seat has become an emblem of safe parenting over the years. And lightweight plastics with high impact resistance and the ability to be molded into innovative, ergonomic shapes are essential to the process of making them. According to research cited by the federal government, child safety seats in passenger cars have been found to reduce fatal injury by 71 percent for infants and 54 percent for toddlers.

Stroller: You can spend as much time shopping for a stroller these days as you can a car. There are tons of options and safety features, many of which you’ll find are constructed with plastics.
FUTURE LEADERS ARE CREATED TODAY

Innovation thrives on people with passion. Let bigger opportunities find you.

The Plastics Industry Association (PLASTICS) Future Leaders in Plastics (FLiP) Committee is devoted to supporting and encouraging the next generation of plastics leaders who will play a critical role in the innovation, technology and future of the plastics industry. To engage, develop and retain future industry leaders, PLASTICS is focused on leadership development, mentoring programs and relationship building opportunities for professionals under 40 years old. Improving the perception of plastics and developing a strong workforce begins with cultivating future leaders who will shape our success.

Testimonial

“Being a part of FLiP allows me to not only connect with others and begin shaping the future of PLASTICS, but the opportunity to learn about the entire plastics industry supply chain and how we, as young leaders, can affect its direction.”

Beth Wetmore Trenor, Advanced Regulatory Specialist, Milliken & Co.
The Plastics Industry Association (PLASTICS) is your go-to source for **leading industry data and market intelligence**. Our research and reports help our members and industry insiders stay in-the-know on the state of the plastics industry. Make informed business decisions to **remain competitive in today’s global marketplace**. These reports are free to members as a benefit. For more info, visit plasticsindustry.org/membership.

**Industry Economics**

**Market Intelligence**

**Insights & Trends**

**Available Now!**

[PLASTICSINDUSTRY.ORG/DATA](http://PLASTICSINDUSTRY.ORG/DATA)
Navigating the Political Landscape
Government Affairs. It sounds like something that happens behind closed doors, among state and federal political insiders who have nothing to do with everyday life. But nothing could be further from the truth. Far from being about closed doors, government affairs is all about opening doors, and windows, and letting in light to help policy makers see their way clearly when making important decisions that affect people's lives. At PLASTICS, our Government Affairs team keeps one finger on the pulse of politics nationwide and the other on the wellbeing of our members, watching for the effects of one upon the other.

Essentially, PLASTICS' approach to government affairs is about advocacy—protecting the interests of our members. In some instances, that can mean going up against environmental activist organizations who make poorly informed statements about plastics to legislative bodies but, according to Matt Seaholm, Vice President for Government Affairs, advocacy is about much more than that in the larger picture; advocacy is about an ongoing conversation.

While there are times when quick responses are needed, Matt prefers to look at advocacy as an exercise in civil communication that, when conducted well, can avoid ever getting to the point of ill-tempered conflict.

"Plastic has become too partisan in many ways, and it shouldn't be," Matt says, cautioning against an us-versus-them mentality. "I don't care who you are," he continues, "if you run for office, you're interested in doing good things for your constituents. When a lawmaker has voters with family-supporting jobs in the plastics industry, he or she is much more likely to listen to the great story our industry has to tell. That's why much of what we do involves helping elected officials understand that while important, the plastics issue is about a lot more than recycling and cleaning up the oceans. It's about people. And here in the U.S., more than one million of them working in the industry."

Changing perceptions

Many politicians and other public officials simply don't understand that the plastics industry isn't the monolithic, environmentally hostile thing activists have painted it as. Many plastics businesses are found in nondescript metal buildings tucked in alongside...
highways and inside commercial parks. They are, quite literally, right in the backyard (and part of the backbone) of the communities elected officials have sworn to serve. And they are doing business in clean, high-tech facilities.

“I have gone on plant tours with politicians and watched as the realization of what plastics manufacturing really is comes over them,” Matt says. He has seen attitudes change when that perception of a gargantuan industry is replaced by the reality of people working in an immaculate facility, a couple of hundred people who represent local families relying on the plastics industry.

“Several times,” Matt recalls, “politicians have turned to me after a plant tour and told me they probably would have voted for an anti-plastics piece of legislation, but not anymore.”

That’s where the idea of conversation comes in. Matt and his team would much rather be in a position to get involved in legislative and regulatory efforts before they escalate into problems for the plastics industry. A big part of that conversation begins with informing PLASTICS members.

Not many companies have a dedicated department to keep them up to date on federal, state and local legislation and regulatory activity. The PLASTICS Government Affairs team handles that role for PLASTICS members by monitoring and sharing activity that might affect the plastics industry.

Paying attention to what Government Affairs shares is important. While the team stands ready to make statements and appear at meetings, they are at their most effective when working in partnership with members. A case in point is one involving two pieces of California legislation that PLASTICS helped to defeat in 2020. Those bills, Senate Bill 54 and Assembly Bill 1080, when they started out, had laudable goals regarding the environment but ultimately would have imposed dangerous burdens on plastics companies that make important contributions to the California economy.

Connecting member companies affected by the legislation with important swing-vote legislators allowed those legislators to become better educated on the issues involved. PLASTICS was able to add some personal-level significance to a larger effort in which we were participating with regard to SB54 and AB1080—an effort that led to those bills not passing.

But the story doesn’t end there. Such activity is not simply about preventing legislation from passing; it is about continuing a conversation of advocacy that leads to truly viable solutions. As Tony Radoszewski, President and CEO of PLASTICS said when the bills failed to pass, “We now have a chance to hit the reset button and work with all interested stakeholders to craft legislation that will really address the issue of sustainability. The plastics industry stands ready to work with legislators to get something done in the coming months so by next year, there is a workable bill in front of lawmakers in California.”

Partnering with members

The kind of member/association partnership that prevented the passage of those California bills is exactly what we need to be doing nationwide on an ongoing basis, according to Matt Seaholm. “We keep our ears to the ground and seek opportunities to be proactive in our outreach,” he says, “but a DC-based association representing a seemingly faceless industry is nowhere near as effective as citizen members stepping up and telling elected leaders about the dangers flawed legislation poses to working families.”

In a nutshell, a term like “plastics industry” may conjure nothing but inaccurate images in the minds of legislators—smokestacks, refineries, pollution, workers in faraway lands and debris floating in distant waters, the stuff of environmentalist propaganda. That kind of mental picture leads to the casting of votes that harm our industry. But the true story of local companies, staffed by real people, supporting families and communities leads to cooperation that benefits everyone involved.

How does that member/association partnership grow? A great place to start is by making sure to read the information you receive from the PLASTICS Government Affairs team. They put out a lot of great intel. You don’t need to become a legislative expert; you just need to take a look at the basics and consider what that information means for
your company. Our government affairs newsletter, recently rebranded as The Hopper, has been designed to make that information easier to navigate and digest than ever before.

When you see something in The Hopper that has real ramifications for your company or a colleague company in the association, reach out to your elected officials and let them know there are people they represent who will be affected. The PLASTICS Government Affairs team will be happy to help facilitate that dialogue. They’re always ready and willing to follow up with you and explore new ways of continuing the conversation of advocacy. As a matter of fact, watch for some news from PLASTICS about showing officials who and where you are through “virtual fly-ins” that will allow your voice to be heard from the comfort of your home or office.

An easy-to-implement course of action you can take right away is to share government affairs news with employees. If there’s governmental activity happening in your area that poses a threat to your company, get organized and encourage your workforce to contact the officials involved. Regarding his days working in a legislative office, Matt Seaholm recalls, “If you get five phone calls on a single subject, you start thinking an issue could be blowing up in your district.” He goes on to point out the effect a hundred employee-constituents can have as they reach out as individuals to those legislative offices.

Partnership and conversation are going to play larger and larger roles in the very near future. Given the polarization in American politics, bipartisanship is going to be key to the success of the plastics industry and to PLASTICS as an organization. We will need to communicate on both sides of the aisle in terms that go beyond party affiliation and ideology, expressing the human element of each discussion; we need to be clear about real people providing for their families and communities with local jobs in the plastics industry, and we need to make sure decision-makers know the true, life-improving and even life-saving realities of plastics.

Each and every member can, and is encouraged to, become part of that effort. Don’t be afraid to express your passion for plastics; the naysayers have it all wrong and it is up to all of us in the industry to correct perceptions. As Matt Seaholm says, in summing up the importance of member involvement, “The most effective and powerful tool we have is our members advocating for the industry. Your participation is critical to any success that we have. We can’t do it without you.”
Communicating the Value of Single-Use Plastic
Billions of people around the world use disposable plastic bottles and other containers and packaging. But do they know why?

Unfortunately, the ubiquity of plastic, in particular single-use products, obscures the science behind this modern material, its widespread application to advanced fields from medicine to electronics, and even its value to shoppers at the grocery store check-out aisle, who, when they think of plastic bottles or bags, probably think about litter or pollution, rather than the many benefits plastic brings.

It's ironic. In the space of a couple generations, plastic, which took off in the Space Age and accompanied revolutions in agriculture and energy that have also spared countless people the hardships of our forebears, has today become the scourge of humanity, not the savior it is.

To understand this reversal in public perception, it’s important to understand the context. The decline in public perception of plastic coincides with a decline in public perception of just about everything. Constant negativity in our 24-hour-a-day news media, projected on every screen including the one in your pocket, drives the public mood downward.

Tell a story. We invented the lightbulb, put a man on the moon and harnessed the power of the atom. Plastic is a hero of the American Century—that plastic bottle you’re holding is the height of human achievement. Make a similar impact on your audience by conjuring images of a world before plastic. The Stone Age wasn’t as romantic as our opponents depict.

Be empathetic. Plastic bottles are the only reliable source of drinking water in much of the world. Single-use packaging for toothpaste, soap and shampoo allows people everywhere to purchase what were once considered luxuries. Even in the U.S., plastic saves working families time and money. Put yourself in their shoes. You’ll be on firm ground.

Surprise people. Talk about plastic’s environmental benefits. It requires less energy to create, transport and prevents food and other waste. Without it, we could never reach environmental goals, such as increased fuel efficiency, our opponents support. Watch the look on their faces when you tell them plastic has a low carbon footprint.

You can’t win ‘em all. We live in partisan times. The media is unrelenting. Some people really do wish for a time before microwave meals—and maybe toaster ovens. So be patient and count up the small victories. They’ll add up eventually.

Finally, remember that, despite a barrage of negativity, single-use plastic has grown in popularity, because it’s still the most practical solution to customers’ needs. They merely want to feel better about what they’re doing already and to know the plastics industry will solve litter and pollution problems, just as the industry has solved other problems human beings have confronted for millennia.
WHEN AND WHERE CAN YOU SEE US NEXT?


2021 PLASTICS Spring Meeting
May 17–19, 2021 | Virtual

2021 Spring Food Packaging Summit
June 8–9, 2021 | Virtual

PLASTICS Fall Meeting
October 5–8, 2021 | St. Petersburg, FL

2021 Fluoropolymers Division Conference
October 26–28 | Fort Lauderdale, FL

31st Annual Vinyl Compounders Conference
December 5–7, 2021 | Savannah, GA

2022 PLASTICS Spring Meeting
March 29–April 1, 2022 | Washington, DC

Re|focus Sustainability and Recycling Summit
May 23–25, 2022 | Cincinnati, OH

*PLASTICS continues to monitor COVID-19 developments across the country and internationally. We are also monitoring our ability to hold meetings without risk to our attendees, and overall staff health and safety.

Let us know what’s going on at your company.

magazine@plasticsindustry.org
The Plastics Industry Association (PLASTICS) represents the entire plastics supply chain, globally — from materials and equipment suppliers to processors, converters and recyclers. Partnering with leading brand owners, we allow innovative companies to shape our industry’s future. To help your business thrive, PLASTICS provides valuable connections to industry peers, exclusive economic data, the latest standards and regulatory information, and a voice in every state and the nation’s capital.

WHY CHOOSE US?

- **Information** — Access to exclusive economic reports, the latest manufacturing standards and more
- **Events** — Dozens of special events each year promoting partnership and innovation
- **Networking** — Meet new suppliers and customers to grow your business
- **NPE** — We organize one of the world’s largest plastics industry trade shows.

WHAT DO WE DO?

- **ADVOCACY**
  Advocate for an environment where the plastics industry thrives.

- **COMMUNICATIONS**
  Educate society on the true value of plastic.

ENGAGEMENT

Deliver value that drives growth and engagement for members and customers.

SUSTAINABILITY

Lead and rally the plastics industry in sustainable materials management.
During more than 35 years in the plastics industry, Glenn Anderson has held positions of increasing responsibility in direct sales, sales leadership and general management. His special dedication to creating healthy and productive work environments built on strong relationships, transparency and strategic planning made him the perfect candidate for his current role.

But this isn’t the first time PLASTICS has benefitted from Glenn’s talents. On the member side of things, he served as an at-large officer of the PLASTICS Board of Directors, as chairman of the Plastics Industry Equipment Council and the 2018 chairman for NPE: The Plastics Show. We sat down for a chat with Glenn to get his perspective, about a year into his new job.
Have you learned anything about the association that you didn’t know before?

My previous engagement with the association was focused on the equipment side of things. Since taking on my current role, I’ve been blown away by how much the association is doing for members throughout the plastics supply chain. The opportunities for everyone in our industry to experience beneficial touchpoints with PLASTICS are enormous.

Anything specific you’d like to point out?

There’s so much, I don’t want to leave anybody out. In addition to the work that the Equipment Council does, which I’m very familiar with, the people who lead our Materials and Processors efforts do an amazing job coordinating an incredible level of member engagement, putting together conferences and webinars packed with member-generated content. Our Government Affairs team does the entire supply chain an invaluable service keeping everyone abreast of legislation and regulations nationwide. And our Marketing & Communications team is great at getting the truth about plastics out to the public.

Is PLASTICS membership an executive benefit or does it extend throughout a company?

Executives certainly benefit regarding networking and industry intelligence but there are great opportunities at other levels to become involved and learn with our councils and committees.

We even reach out to the youngest members of the plastics community with FLiP, our Future Leaders in Plastics group. In fact, right now we’re starting an initiative in which FLiP ambassadors will be assigned to monitor the activity on each of our three councils; the councils are each designating a point person to help the FLiP ambassador navigate the structure of their assigned council.

What if you're not on the leadership track of a company?

Ask your company’s PLASTICS representative what kind of help he or she might need. There are skill sets throughout a member organization that can help maximize the benefits of a PLASTICS membership. For instance, administrative support staff can play a role in helping committees and councils track down important information and prepare and package that information so it’s usable.

So, when a CEO signs on with PLASTICS, he or she should spread the word in-house?

Absolutely. We encourage the leaders of our member companies to designate people who they feel will be great connections between their companies and the association and then encourage those designees to do the same. Allow your people the time it takes to be involved with the association, because the more your company puts into it, the more you’re going to get out of it.
plastic then and now

CLASSIC PLASTIC

Plastic Unlocks the Secret to a Popular Puzzle
It’s safe to say that anyone who grew up in America since the 1950s has gotten a lot of enjoyment out of plastics. And we’re not talking about the amazing contributions plastics have made to medicine, construction and manufacturing. We’re talking about classic plastic memories, like a 3x3x3-inch plastic cube made of 26 smaller cubes.

In 1974, a Hungarian professor named Erno Rubik built such a cube to help architecture students understand three-dimensional problem solving. Jazzing it up with 54 stickers of white, red, blue, yellow, orange and green, he set about solving the problem he had created. It took him more than a month! Realizing he had quite an intriguing puzzle on his hands, Rubik patented his “Magic Cube” in 1975. “Buvos Kocka”—as it is called in Hungarian—was a hit with the public, but Communist era import-export restrictions were a big roadblock to further success. So, in 1979, Rubik took his puzzle to international toy fairs. A game designer named Tom Kremer became interested in the cube after seeing it at a Nuremberg trade show and made a deal with Rubik for worldwide distribution.

Convinced by Kremer’s vision and passion, the Ideal Toy Company signed on to distribute the product but requested that it be given a new name. And so, in 1980, the world was introduced to “Rubik’s Cube.” Sales started off modestly but took off after a TV ad campaign. By 1981, the puzzle had sold millions of units, becoming a worldwide sensation.

And here’s a fun fact for the plastics industry. The mass-market design for Rubik’s Cube cut the weight of the product in half, making it easier to handle and faster to solve.

Rubik’s Cube remains a global favorite to this day, even taking its place among online games. In November of 2020, the USA’s Max Park beat Australia’s Feliks Zemdegs in the Red Bull Rubik’s Cube World Cup—a virtual event using the Rubik’s Connected Cube that connects players through an app.

By the way, in case the math in the first paragraph is bothering you. Yes, it does seem as if there should be 27 smaller cubes (or “cubies” as they are called in the world of Rubik) but there is actually no center cube. Thus, 26.

Durable, versatile and cost-effective for manufacturers, plastics play a vital role in today’s more than $20 billion market for dolls, toys and games. And they’ve been playing that role for a long time. Is there a particular classic plastic item that made fond memories for you? We’d love to hear about it.

Send us an email at magazine@plasticsindustry.org.
Plastics improve peoples' lives in transformative ways. With more than 1 million net square feet of exhibit space, including 13 must-see technology zones and 2,000+ exhibiting companies, NPE® is the largest plastics show in the Americas, bringing the newest and most innovative plastics solutions together in one space.

Discover more at NPE.org
May 6–10, 2024
Orange County Convention Center | Orlando, FL
NPE.org | #NPE2024