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Quality Assured Plastics - Custom Injection Molders providing equipment for Small to Large Product Runs in a Variety of Industries including Agriculture, Consumer Products and Transportation



Annette Crandall
President

Quality Assured Plastics, Inc.

Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: Ms. Crandall, would you tell us about Quality Assured Plastics Inc?

Ms. Crandall: Quality Assured Plastics is a family-owned business. We started in 1986 and we are custom injection molders which means we do a wide variety of products for different industries. We are very diverse serving mostly the transportation, heavy truck, agricultural equipment and consumer items industries.

What we do is not very exciting but it is very important because the components that we make are critical pieces in the products everybody uses every day. It is vital that our products are correct and on time because a lot of other production facilities are depending on what we do to be correct and on time.

CEOCFO: What are the challenges in being on time today?

Ms. Crandall: People are the challenge. We are handling the material; with supply chain issues our team has done a good job of dealing with that but keeping people to run the presses is our biggest challenge right now.

CEOCFO: Have you figured something out that works better?

Ms. Crandall: We are doing two things. We are looking for ways to think outside the box and maybe reach a wider variety of people. We give chances to people that industry typically writes off when they fill out the application. It might be someone with a legal history. We work with local agencies to give marginalized individuals an opportunity.

The other thing we are doing is looking at all of our processes and figuring out what we can do to make the people more efficient so that maybe instead of this process taking a whole person's eight hours of the shift, if we can make that process more efficient then that person may be able to do two job assignments, which makes them more effective. It is more than just making them work harder, it is making them work smarter.

CEOCFO: Are there technologies that can help in the process?

Ms. Crandall: There is automation available but our niche is the smaller runs. In a typical week a machine might run five different products, so it may change every day or every other day. Automation is geared towards those things that you put in and you run them for a month or long periods of time. What we are looking to do is build a fixture that de-gates it faster or more reliably. Does a conveyer save time? Sometimes it is simple things and sometimes it is more involved.

CEO CFO: *I imagine you realized that long ago!*

Ms. Crandall: I did always know that. We bought new machines, we got rid of old machines that took too much people time and we brought in new machines that are more efficient and reliable. It is not just our people doing the work, it is their ideas. It's about how they can make things better and finding the biggest challenge. Their ideas are the best asset. Yes there is a lot of technology and it is very expensive and you have to have the infrastructure to run and maintain it, so for what we do it is not appearing that that is our best option, our people are.

CEO CFO: *Do potential customers know what they want or do they work with you to figure out the best options? What types of engagements do you have with your customers?*

Ms. Crandall: It runs the whole gamut. We have customers that come in with a blueprint and they tell us what they want and everything we need to know about the product. Then some guy comes in with a part in his hand and says, "We need some of these." We help them design the tool and to pick out the material and figure out where we can save material and how we can make this more moldable and save cost and time.



[Jesse Garant Metrology Center](#)

Sometimes they come tool that has been running somewhere else and we either run it as-is or look at it and say, "Wow! If we did this with this it would make this change and save money here or do this better." It just depends on the customer. Probably 80% of our sales are to four customers and then we have twenty other customers that make up the other 20%. It really does run the gamut from the mom-and-pop shops to the big automotive type companies that want a Certified Women-Owned Company that can do the job.

"What we do is not very exciting but it is very important because the components that we make are critical pieces in the products everybody uses every day. It is vital that our products are correct and on time because a lot of other production facilities are depending on what we do to be correct and on time." Annette Crandall

CEO CFO: *Does it make a difference to potential customers?*

Ms. Crandall: To some it does. I think it helps some with retention. In the market that we are in, it is a good thing to have. Do we get business from it? No we do not.

CEO CFO: *Are there new materials in the industry that you are able to take advantage of or is it pretty much tried and true?*

Ms. Crandall: Most of it is tried and true. There are new processes and new materials, usually those are sorted out above where we are. They are done buy the engineers and analyzed by the engineers at the customer's facility.

Sometimes we will run samples of something new to see how it works and then it goes out for testing. We do not tend to be in the R&D portion of it unless they need a new tool sampled or a new material sampled.

CEOCFO: *We came upon QAP as a Michigan Company to Watch; would you tell us about that recognition?*

Ms. Crandall: We were pretty pleased with that. We were nominated and I filled out an application, forgot about it and then got notified that we were chosen. We have been working on a turnaround since 2017 and in 2019 I thought we had it nailed. We were on our way and everybody had pulled together doing a really good job, and then COVID pulled the rug out from under us. Everybody did whatever it took to get through.

We were deemed essential so although we reduced hours, we did not really reduce staff. Everybody worked well to keep the parts to our customers when they needed them. We got through COVID, and the plan that we had in 2019 is progressing, so I was really pleased we were recognized in this way.



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CEOCFO: *The American flag is big and bold on your site. How important is that to customers or is your product typically made locally?*

Ms. Crandall: Our parts go to North America, Central America and Europe. We are very proud of Made in America. We helped re-shore some products to say they were made here. Why I understand some of the reasoning for buying offshore, I think Made in America is important for supply chain and I think it is important for our economy.

CEOCFO: *Do you think people are recognizing that more today?*

Ms. Crandall: Very much so.

CEOCFO: *What do the next six months to a year look like for QAP?*

Ms. Crandall: To continue working the plan and growing the company and doing what we set out to do in 2019. What we had planned is working and right now we are just working the plan.

CEOCFO: *You work with a lot of industries. Are there any industries where you would like to make more inroads, where you have a deliberate strategy?*

Ms. Crandall: We are targeting the agricultural equipment and consumer items. Consumer items, small engines, small equipment such as lawn mowers, those types of things. We see that market remaining really strong. We continue to grow our transportation segment because heavy trucks are a growing market.

CEOCFO: *When your salesforce is talking to a prospective new customer, what rings a bell with them and what are you able to tell them so that they understand Quality means quality and that your company is what it should be and maybe even more?*

Ms. Crandall: One of the things that we tell them is our customer base stays with us. Of our top ten customers, the average is over ten years to have our customers and some of them have been our customer since the mid-nineties. We do the job that they need done and we can make the product at a price that is competitive. The quality will be excellent and our delivery is on time.

CEOCFO: *Is there anything that someone might miss when they look at Quality Assured Plastics that they really should recognize?*

Ms. Crandall: We are small but we get it done. With the team effort we have taken on some really aggressive projects and the team pulls together and gets it done. We often get underestimated because of our size.