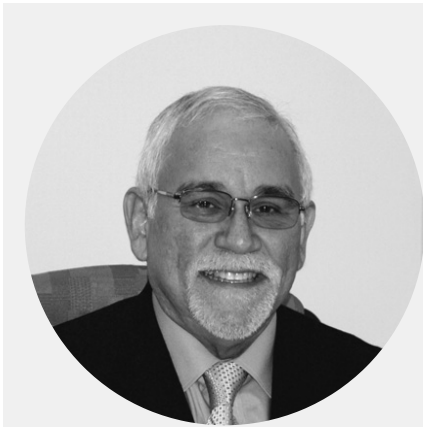


Interview: Roberto Tous - President, Techno Plastics Industries, Puerto Rico



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Based in Añasco, Techno Plastics Industries Inc. (TPI) is one of Puerto Rico's leading injection molding company that services medical device companies on the island and internationally. Roberto L. Tous, TPI's president, highlights their strong connection with the medtech industry and current investments.

You are one of the founders of TPI; how did you start the company and what were your initial expectations?

TPI is a spinoff of Baxter. All six founding partners were employees of Baxter's former Cardio Vascular Group which was made by Baxter-Bentley and Baxter Edwards. Some of us had experience in plastics, while others had experience in quality and medical devices. We saw an opportunity to provide the west side of Puerto Rico with an injection molding company with a background in medical device production. One of our first clients was Baxter. We knew it would be tough due to the fact that our capital to invest was very limited; we had to take out a loan from the Small Business Administration and we talked to PRIDCO in order to obtain some funding. We started TPI with \$36,000, six associates and three machines in April 1992, running a one shift operation. Today we have 25 machines as part of a 24/7 operation, and we have a workforce of 140 people.

Once established, what were the biggest challenges and opportunities that you saw in the early days?

The biggest challenge was to be able to manage our assets strategically in order to grow the business. The biggest opportunity was that not very many molding companies with cleanroom were established on the west side of the island. Therefore we had a golden opportunity to provide services to this region. In the beginning we supplied parts from Arroyo to Guaynabo, so we covered almost the entire island. These days, we have about 12 clients, most of who are on the west side of the island. We used to make parts for Stryker, Electrobiology and Harvey Hubbell but at the moment we make parts for Abbott Medical Optics, Integra Neuroscience, Hewlett Packard, Heraeus Medical Components, CooperVision, Fenwal Fresenius Kabi, Maquet in New Jersey, Edward Lifesciences Añasco, BARD, GE, Beckton Dickinson, Ulti-Mate, Oscor, CooperVision in the UK, as well as CareFusion, and Edward Lifesciences in the Dominican Republic.

What do you consider to be TPI's biggest milestones so far?

The biggest milestone is to establish a business, to make it successful with continuous growth for 23 years. We are very proud of our growth, which has been due to our commitment to quality and being flexible enough to provide a good service that is expected from the supplier's perspective.

What is particularly innovative about TPI's products?

We are an original equipment manufacturer and a certified ISO 9001-2008 supplier. During December we'll be receiving the BSI visit to audit us on ISO 9001 and 13485. We do not own the tools, although we maintain them. To give you an idea, one of our clients has 32 cavity molds warranted for five million cycles. We have tools that are in production for over 35 million cycles, essentially extending the life of the mold sevenfold. When you have an excellent maintenance system, this is what makes us competitive. If you need parts to be supplied to you three times a week, we will do that. TPI has the flexibility to accommodate to our clients.

The medical community is moving to less invasive procedures, through the use of miniature devices. Now we offer micro molding with a machine fitted with a rotary platen and a camera for the inspection of the produced parts. This will give us the infrastructure needed to service this manufacturing sector.

Another innovation is the use of Infinity QS to collect all of the product dimensional data from all of our measuring equipment. 90 percent of the part numbers produced are in our Infinity QS database. This provides us with the ability to access the product data and perform statistical

analysis to determine trends that will allow us to take the required corrective actions.

We are investing in our people training them in the Lean Six Sigma culture. Currently we have five of our associates working on their Green Belt certification.

Which products are the most successful?

In terms of volume, our biggest client is CooperVision. We have six machines producing ten million parts every month. We do blisters, which is the package where they put the lenses. But we make some other products that are used to save lives. Most of what we do here is assembled into a medical device (98 percent of our business is for medical devices) is used to save and improve quality of life.

How do your employees understand the importance of your work?

All associates go through a training program before they begin to perform their duties. On a quarterly basis, we hold meetings with the associates in which we show them videos where they see operations in which the device for which they are making parts is used. The main objective being, that everyone understand that the products we are manufacturing will be used to save lives.

What plans do you have to further your international presence?

Our vision is to be the preferred molder in the Americas. We have established a new sales office to reach the markets of Central, South and North America.

Where can we expect to find TPI in the next five years?

We intend to increase our client base by ten percent, as well as our sales by 20 percent by 2016.

What is left for you to achieve?

Right now I am working on getting my group focused on growing the business. We already have someone helping us get into the sales portion of the business. We are participating in various forums and looking into diversifying the business. We have a mold shop to provide maintenance for all the companies that mold in-house. We are already doing some of that with our neighbors here in Añasco, as well as Fenwal Fresenius Kabi in San German. There is an opportunity there for high-precision quality repairs. We are also looking at Costa Rica, Panama and the Dominican Republic.

What do you consider makes TPI the partner of choice for the market?

TPI is very committed to quality, complying with regulatory requirements, working close with our business partners to find solutions and improvements along the way. We strive for excellence and for a long-lasting relationship, based in trust, confidence and partnership. We are flexible and try to accommodate the needs of our clients. If anyone is looking for quality parts and good service, TPI is the place!

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