



# SIPA OILS THE WHEELS IN HOWARD PACKAGING'S SWITCH TO ISBM FOR LUBRICANT CONTAINERS



SIPA is helping well-known U.S. container maker Howard Packaging switch from PVC and copolyester extrusion blow molding to injection-stretch-blow molding in PET for a range of engine oil bottles. PET is widely used for packaging cooking oil, but Howard Packaging is one of the first companies to switch to PET for production of engine oil bottles. The company, based in Corydon, Indiana, took delivery of its first ECS SP 80 single-stage system a couple of years ago, for production of bottles ranging in size from 16 to 64 oz. With that system now running flat-out, and the company mulling the introduction of smaller (5 oz.) and larger (96 oz.) bottles, it is now considering the acquisition

of a second ECS SP 80. The company is an exclusive supplier of oil bottles for Lucas Oil, a world leader of high performance lubricants, which has a major plant in Corydon. Howard Packaging's Maintenance Purchasing manager Steve Hawkins says the company is very pleased with the move to ISBM PET bottles. "Our customers see PET as more earth-friendly than some alternative materials, and PET certainly provides a healthier working environment for our operatives than PVC," he says. "PET processing equipment is easier to maintain too, as the polymer is kinder to steel. We can also run it with fewer people. Plus, the PET bottles are lighter than versions in PVC, so we save on





material, but they still look much better and give far superior results in drop tests –which is particularly important for oil bottles! PET provides more freedom on design and shape than alternative materials, and logos and engravings come out more clearly with ISBM. PET bottles also have an excellent seal, due to the higher precision of neck/thread formation. There are additional benefits in switching from extrusion-blow

molding (EBM) to ISBM, Hawkins notes. “We don’t need a grinder any more for the bottle tops and tails, so that’s another expense removed, as well as a source of dust. The SIPA system is more energy efficient and the ISBM process is very stable as well.” Steve also praises SIPA for its local presence. “There is a representative we can always call on to get key action items quickly taken care of, and we have had

good technical support to establish an optimal process for our bottles,” he says. On top of that, turn-around time on any mold repairs is short, thanks to SIPA’s U.S. mold repair and renovation operations.

To kick-start the market for PET engine oil bottles, SIPA earlier produced a range of prototypes in various shapes and sizes. “We wanted to show that with ISBM PET, just as with EBM in other plastics, there is no problem in producing an asymmetrical bottle with a rectangular or oval shape, with the neck in the center or offset,” says Paolo Barbaro and Giorgio Gasparini, in charge of the development project at SIPA. In fact, Howard Packaging makes square and round types, with central and offset necks.

Gladson Remos account director for Howard says, Howard Packaging is satisfied with support from SIPA. There is good prospect to sell many ECS SP in very near future.

Privately-owned Howard Packaging makes and decorates high quality containers in several different plastics, providing its customers in automotive and industrial markets with packaging



solutions designed to meet their specific needs. Its 100,000 ft<sup>2</sup> (9300 m<sup>2</sup>) manufacturing facility in southern Indiana is centrally and strategically located to serve local and surrounding regions. Company owner Robert Howard has been in the plastics business for almost forty years. During his earlier years in the chemical industry, he established numerous relationships with not only customers, but suppliers and competitors as well. He wanted to utilize those relationships, and after taking his experiences, acquired knowledge, and outside advice into consideration, he eventually decided on manufacturing the various types of containers he used to purchase.