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Web site changes help Buckeye Shapeform win new clients

By [Roger Renstrom](#) | PLASTICS NEWS CORRESPONDENT

Posted August 28, 2009

COLUMBUS, OHIO (Aug. 28, 1:10 p.m. ET) – Buckeye Shapeform of Columbus, Ohio, has found a way through the Internet to boost marketing and sales of its specialty metal and plastic products.

More tightly focused Web-site content helps Buckeye's uniform resource locator rise to the top of more Internet searches. Comparing 2008 and 2007 results, a visitor's average viewing experience increased to more than 5.5 pages from 2.5 pages and conversion actions jumped to more than 110,000 from about 10,000, the firm said.

During 2008, the revamped site generated more than 1,000 potential leads, 60 new clients and nearly \$100,000 in fresh business and produced results faster than the firm's typical sales-development cycle of 12-18 months, said President Ken Tumbelson.

Buckeye Shapeform's four divisions make enclosures, plastic knobs, seamless tin-plated steel containers and deep-draw metal products for original equipment manufacturers worldwide.

The firm opened a "plain vanilla" Web site in 1998, reworked the content in 2001 and, after a thorough evaluation of potential Web-site-service providers, partnered in early 2007 with a unit of Thomas Publishing Co. LLC of New York. Previously, Buckeye had marketed through the publisher's print registers and Web site.

Over several months, Buckeye managers and ThomasNet consultants collaborated. Studies analyzed the manufacturing capabilities, products, sales processes and end-market-customer buying patterns of Buckeye clients.

The redesigned Buckeye Web site was launched in February 2008 featuring an easy-to-use online catalog and better display of products in more than 16,000 configurations.

Buckeye plans to incorporate ThomasNet's computer-aided-design solution, which allows an applications engineer to design, download and insert three-dimensional CAD drawings directly into a project.

Product configurations include more than 10,000 knobs. Relevant information helps identify a proper configuration. "This is a huge benefit to both our internal sales staff and potential customer," Tumbelson said.

"We feel strongly about the opportunity to grow revenue in our knob business considering the consolidation in the manufacturing sector," Tumbelson said. "There are not many knob manufacturers left. Our challenge is to get our name out there."

He said a New Jersey company with annual requirements in the 50,000-range is Buckeye's largest-volume customer for knobs.

Buckeye operates five injection molding machines with clamping forces of 44-200 tons to make instrumentation knob shells and skirts mostly from ABS pellets. The company has also used polycarbonate, polypropylene, clear acrylic and some structural foams, Tumbelson said.

Other molded products include card guides, bezels, standoffs and flip feet.

The firm uses a computer numerically controlled routing machine and bending table to mill and bend flat sheets of high impact polystyrene, PC or Kydex thermoplastic for enclosures. "The plastic enclosure segment represents less than 2 percent of our revenue stream," Tumbelson said. "This is a relatively new product offering and is viewed as a potential growth area."

Buckeye Shapeform regards its integrated enclosure-making fabrication process as an alternative to injection molding, thermofforming, vacuum forming or pressure forming.

The manufacturing process for plastic enclosures "lends itself to smaller prototypes for low-volume runs," Tumbelson said. The process avoids startup and tooling costs, and every plastic enclosure is customized to a customer's design and specifications.

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"We also do some contract manufacturing of plastic parts that support a local company that makes and repairs gas meters," Tumbelson said.

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In 2008, resin-based products accounted for 9.6 percent of the firm's sales of about \$6 million. Of that total, metal enclosures accounted for about 60 percent with end uses ranging from industrial sound and audio measuring equipment to test devices.

Buckeye was founded in 1902, employs 50 and occupies 80,000 square feet.

The firm's legal name is Buckeye Stamping Co. Inc. Buckeye acquired Shapeform Inc. of Plain City, Ohio, in November 1996, completed relocation of Shapeform to Columbus in April 1997 and began using the doing-business-as identity Buckeye Shapeform.

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