



Marilyn Fitchett editor/591-2300

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## Prototype partners

General Electric's plastics group had considered installing an experimental molding machine at its Application Development Center in Southfield. But company officials decided that having it on use only 30 to 40 percent of the time was impractical. So GE struck a deal with Allmand Associates of Livonia, an advanced prototype house, that allows both companies to use the machine at the Allmand facility at up to 90 percent capacity.

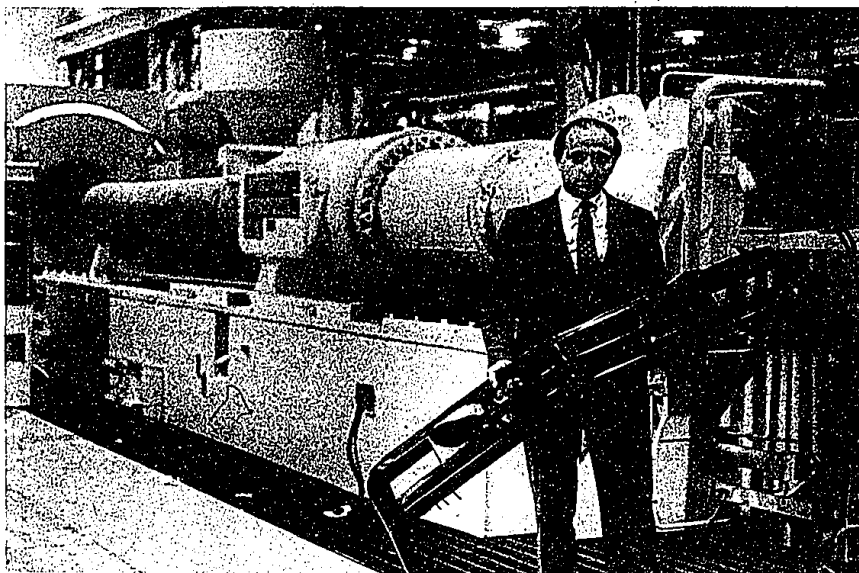
By Carolyn Smith  
Special writer

Allmand Associates of Livonia has purchased a 3,000-ton press intended solely for experimental or developmental work for large automotive exterior parts.

The press will give Detroit-area automotive engineers a chance to work with all resins and alloys. It will be used to mold bumpers, fenders, fascias, door panels, rear quarter panels, air dams, and rear and front spoilers, said Nick Bogdanos, Allmand's general manager.

The Plastics Group of General Electric Co. had considered installing the machine at its Application Development Center in Southfield. But company officials decided that having an experimental molding machine in use only 30 to 40 percent of the time was impractical.

So GE Plastics struck a deal with Allmand, an advanced prototype house, that would allow both companies to use the machine at the Allmand facility at up to 90 percent capacity. To prepare for arrival of the new machine, Allmand expanded its facility by 5,000 square feet, added a machine bay and built private offices for customer use. The cost of the machine, expansion and



ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

Allmand general manager Nick Bogdanos with a bumper prototype that is the product of the injection molding press behind him.

additions was \$2 million.

The press was manufactured by Krauss Maffel Corp. of Frankfurt, Ky. A worldwide supplier of injection molding machines, Krauss Maffel entered into a partnership with Allmand and GE Plastics.

IN A RECENT speech announcing the three-company partnership, Herbert Hoedl, general manager of transportation marketing and technical development for the

Pittsfield, Mass.-based GE Plastics, said: "The large-part injection molded exterior automotive market is growing at a truly explosive rate. . . . Detroit is where prototype molding is happening. Yet, ironically, there are very few machines available for development work (in the Detroit area) because most of them are used for production. And of the few available, most are based on old technology."

Hoedl stressed the importance of using the latest in machine technology and of having the prototype house geographically close to automobile manufacturers. Work on drawing to prototype part that once took 10 months will be reduced about 15 weeks, he said.

The Application Development Center of GE Plastics in Southfield is considered a world leader in engineering thermoplastics, which, unlike thermoset plastics, can be recycled. Established in 1974, the center has 99 employees and plans to expand its facility next year.

BOGDANOS SAID Allmand Associates is gearing for the 1990s, when the auto industry will be making plastic fenders, doors and hoods. The same dogged determination that helped the company grow from a three-person sales organization into a tool maker, prototype house and maker of customized, low-volume injection-molded parts will contribute to its success, Bogdanos predicted.

Allmand was founded in 1970 by the late John Allmand primarily to provide prototype work for the automotive industry. To supply the products, the company subcontracted everything from tool making to injection molding.

Customers wanted more services under one roof. In 1973, company officials set up a prototype tool building, wood shop, foundry and mold shop. They also bought the company's first injection molding machine to make parts off its own tools.

In 1977, the company started booking a few injection-mold machines for low-volume production. "There was a big demand for low volume that nobody else wanted," Bogdanos said. "We ended up running three shifts six days a week."

Fire destroyed most of the facility in 1980, the same year the company's founder died and his son, John Jr., took over. It took most of that year to rebuild. That

accomplished, the company sought to diversify from strictly automotive customers. It also pioneered production of zinc alloy molds.

"Just a few years ago," Bogdanos explained, "the plastics industry felt that zinc alloy tooling might not be strong enough for large body parts." In 1983, Allmand launched an extensive prototype program with Ford Motor Co. Using materials, processing and technical expertise of GE Plastics, Allmand validated zinc alloy tooling for the bumper of the 1986 Ford Taurus and its counterpart, the Mercury Sable.

TODAY, THE company can build a prototype tool, supply prototype parts, convert the tool to a production tool and run production. From 1981 through 1983 it manufactured more than 10,000 pairs of body moldings for the Cars and Concepts program for the Mustang convertible. And last year and this, it produced 30,000 air dams for the BMW 325 series.

A walk through the facility demonstrates the company hasn't forgotten its mission to diversify. Here is a computer cover. Over there is a Black & Decker advertising display box. Beyond are some fish tank parts, a computer cabinet, a tractor gear-shift boot, a spare boat propeller. The company guarantees zinc alloy tooling for 60,000 parts, a commitment Bogdanos said is rare in the industry.

The building now occupies 60,000 square feet and can't expand further. But next spring, Bogdanos said, Allmand will occupy a 43,000-square-foot facility just south of its existing building on Levan near Plymouth. The building will house the tooling operation, freeing the present building for manufacturing.

The privately owned company employs 140 people and expects to have \$10 million in sales this year. That compares to the \$2.5 million it had in sales in 1977, Bogdanos said.

Foreign competition doesn't bother Bogdanos. "Europe and the Far East don't have zinc alloy engineering or the ability to make these parts."

Time is a precious commodity in Detroit's ability to remain globally competitive in the automotive market and aftermarket. Zinc alloy tools require only about a third of the time it takes to make steel tools, he said.

## Benefits are numerous for those who delegate

By Bill Parker  
Staff writer

The biggest problem those in authoritative positions see is in delegating individuals to specific tasks — letting go.

In general, the manager/boss figure doesn't like to give total responsibility of completing a specific job to another because he or she fears the individual may not complete the assignment correctly. And responsibility for the project usually still lies with the manager/boss. According to Jane Goodman, associate director of the Continuum Center at Oakland University, the toughest thing to do is to let go and have trust in the individual even the task.

"Managers need to have trust in their subordinate. Lack of trust leads to fear, and fear causes anxiety in both the delegator and the subordinate," said Goodman in a recent "How to Delegate" seminar at OU. "The manager, if you want something done right, do it yourself," she said. "It's difficult and confusing. It won't allow for developing underdeveloped management, and it often leads to unsupporting authority or causing a lack of confidence in the subordinate."

But the advantages of delegating responsibility are numerous.

For the delegator it creates more time for completing his duties and allows him or her to become more effective in performing them. It enables the delegator to save the work site knowing the work is being done, and allows more time for innovative planning.

For the subordinate the advantages are even greater. Delegating presents the opportunity for learning, growth and advancement. It creates a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction, presents a challenge and allows the individual to become better informed.

DELEGATING ALSO promotes growth, efficiency and quality within the company or organization itself.

"Delegation is a kind of motivational tool," said Goodman. "One of the best ways to motivate someone is to give them a challenge. What (delegators) have to do is find out what motivates people, whether it's recognition, freedom, the opportunity of challenge, whatever. Find out what it is and do it."

Many times managers destroy motivation without realizing it. Such actions as dwelling on weaknesses, expecting perfection or telling someone exactly how to do

the job will only lead to a lack of confidence in the subordinate.

Managers who only care about themselves and their own advancement, don't listen or don't tell the subordinate what they're doing right, also tend to stand in the way of progress.

When the need to delegate occurs, the first thing a manager/boss needs to do is find an individual capable of fulfilling the task. The subordinate needs to be equipped with all the personal tools necessary to complete the job. If the individual gets in over his or her head, the result will either be late or it won't meet the standards needed for satisfactory completion.

Next, the manager needs to explain why the job is important. If the individual feels he or she is just doing someone else's dirty work — that it isn't a valuable task — the quality of work will usually be low.

DELEGATING SHOULD be done in terms of results wanted. Managers should leave room for the subordinates to decide how they want to meet the needs. If every detail is drawn out for the individual, there will be no challenge or feeling of accomplishment.

Authority should also be defined and never undercut. Give the subordinate enough authority to complete the task without continually having to return to the manager for permission. If the subordinate feels as though his or her hands are tied, the task will become frustrating and the potential for success will be lessened.

A deadline must also be agreed upon as well as check points throughout the project. This will enable the delegator and the subordinate to get together and compare notes. This way, if something is going wrong a solution can be arrived at before a major hangup turns into a major problem. The manager will have an opportunity to correct or commend the subordinate on the job, and the subordinate will have the opportunity to ask questions and verify his or her progress.

Finally the manager should ask for feedback. Does the subordinate understand the overall picture? Does he or she foresee any problems or setbacks? Questions such as these should be answered before work on the project begins.

The bottom line is that the manager must have confidence in the person delegated to the task.

Once delegated, the task belongs to someone else and that someone needs to complete the task without interference from higher-ups.

## Know fees of debt-adjusting firms

Companies that offer to consolidate all your debts and present you with one "simple monthly bill" are generally not out to save you money, according to the Better Business Bureau.

Except for some non-profit organizations that provide this as a public service either at no charge or for a nominal fee, the Better Business Bureau has found that debt-adjusting companies often tack on an additional 5 to 10 percent (or more) to our debts and then pay the bills for you with your money. While this may make bill-paying time simpler, if

you had problems coming up with enough money in the first place the additional cost may make matters worse.

Some debt-adjusting companies state that they will contact the companies you owe and try to arrange a reduced monthly payment. But the final decision on whether to reduce your payment is up to your creditors, not the debt adjuster. Ultimately, you are responsible for paying the creditors what you owe to them.

Before signing a contract with a debt-adjusting company, check for

cancellation information. The company may charge a cancellation fee. Knowing what a debt-adjusting company won't do may be as important as what it will do. A debt-adjusting company will not:

- lend money to pay off your bills;
- pay off your bills all at once;
- use its own money to pay off your bills.

Check with your secretary of state or attorney general to determine if the for-profit or non-profit debt-adjusting company is bonded.



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