

John McLoughlin BA Industrial Design (Engineering), CSci, FIMMM

After graduating in Industrial Design (Engineering) at Manchester Polytechnic (Metropolitan University), worked for six years for injection and thermoforming trade moulder, North West Plastics, designing a wide range of products. Gained first patent.

For next nine years, worked in Amsterdam for Borg-Warner Chemicals (now part of G E Plastics), the world's leading ABS manufacturer, nursing hundreds of new applications through design & development stages and rescuing many others that had suffered problems. Managed a prototyping and part testing laboratory. Travelled extensively throughout Europe to support customers and sales offices. Visited USA for information transfer. Evaluated Moldflow software for the entire global organisation and organised international in-house seminar to report findings. Wrote 32,000 word manual on assembly techniques, a highly abridged version of which was eventually published by General Electric Plastics. Introduced computer aided adhesive selection system for customer support.

Returned to UK to run Development section of the trade thermoformer, Thompson Plastics, helping them to gain BS 5750 (parts 1 & 2), before becoming in-house plastics specialist for PZ Cussons for nine years. There he gained valuable experience and received intensive training in a wide range of conversion processes and was heavily involved in design of packaging and leisure goods, tooling and machine specification, process audit and hands-on, sleeves-up factory management in regular visits to Nigeria. Prepared and delivered training to local personnel. Audited suppliers in several countries, including China, Poland and Greece. Tooling and machine procurement took him to Belgium, France, Germany and Italy. Introduced the group to process simulation and rapid prototyping. Gained second patent.

Upon leaving PZ Cussons, started POLYnnovation consultancy in 1999, when he wrote a detailed training manual for thermoformed packaging for the then British Polymer Training Association (now Polymer Training), in Telford. For a brief period (2000–2001), sailed the choppy waters of higher education as Senior Lecturer in Product Design and Design Studies at Nottingham Trent University, after which he continued with the POLYnnovation Consultancy. Spent fifteen months helping JCB develop, then launch new plastics-rich back hoe loader, resolve early production challenges, before suggesting and implementing major cost savings. He was also an active member of their global colour forum, a fierce defender of the famous JCB yellow. As well as helping other large plc's such as Carillion and Unite with multi-material, multi-process projects, he is just as happy giving assistance to smaller enterprises, which are unlikely to possess a large design and development resource. He has also given advice as an expert witness in cases of alleged patent infringement.

In 2003, POLYnnovation became sole distributor of the “Back-to-Basics” system of introductory material selection and educational kits initiated by Alan Griffiths and developed by BPTA (now PTL, Telford).

John is also very active professionally. For several years he was a member of the former Polymer Design Group of the IOM³ and remains an enthusiastic member of the working party for the Design Innovation in Plastics Award, thought to be the world’s longest-running student design competition. Through this involvement he has gained valuable exposure to fresh design thinking, as well as the judging process itself. Other design judging activities have included the PRW Awards for Excellence and its annual “descendant” — the Plastics Industry Awards. John is guest lecturer in the annual Polymer Study Tours for secondary school teachers and technical seminars. Gave paper at RAPRA’s inaugural “Art of Plastics Design” conference, in Berlin, October 2005, followed by lecture at the British Plastics first such venture “Innovation through Design in Plastics” in April 2006. He is vice Chairman of the Manchester Polymer Group and heads its Programme sub-committee, which organises a very full programme of evening lectures and visits, as well as an annual seminar on rubber or plastics.

He is an enthusiastic ambassador for the responsible use of plastics, which he defines as informed material selection; process optimisation for minimal energy consumption and quality rejects; design which minimises material content while maximising delight; and ensuring that energy invested in producing new plastics items is not lost by unsound “environmental” practice—however well-intentioned—when those items are no longer wanted.

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