

Wentworth expanding in China, East Europe

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CHICAGO --
NPE Daily - June 21, 2006

Wentworth Technologies Co. Ltd. (Booth E10346) will expand production to China within 18 months and expects to double its capacity in Eastern Europe within nine months.



Wentworth's Walter Kuskowski: "It is no longer sufficient to be the best in your region."

But that global expansion will help guarantee that Wentworth's North American business also remains healthy, with production in Canada and the United States focusing on fast turnaround and high-end molds, said Walter Kuskowski, president and chief executive officer, during a June 20 interview at NPE 2006 in Chicago.

"You limit your customer base if you don't embrace business globally," Kuskowski said.

Burlington, Ontario-based Wentworth was among the first North American companies to invest in Eastern Europe, setting up mold making and processing in Poland in the 1990s.

It now makes tooling for blow molding, PET injection blow molding, injection molds and die stamping, as well as thermoforming from locations in Poland.

That expertise created in Poland has brought it increased business from global customers and an ability to compete on a low-wage basis, he said.

The Eastern European operations are running at full capacity now, with some overflow work coming back to North America, Kuskowski said.

The new China operations - with both mold making and thermoforming - will give Wentworth another competitive angle, he said.

Wentworth plans to set up a wholly owned facility, mostly serving the Chinese market. It already has an option to buy land north of Shanghai.

The production will join a sales and service facility already in China.

Kuskowski, who was born in Poland, is a big proponent of a global outlook for businesses.

He first took Wentworth to Eastern Europe because customers wanted him there. The years since then have only seen more benefits to that location. Poland and its neighbors are now part of the European Union, which improves access to markets throughout Europe and helps to protect the company's intellectual property.

An increasing number of global customers have moved there seeking the same benefits Wentworth found, he said.

“What is happening in the tooling business is that it is no longer sufficient to be the best in your region,” Kuskowski said. “You can’t just be the best in North America. You have to be the best globally.”

About two-thirds of the production in Poland is exported beyond Europe.

The global base also allows Wentworth to pick and choose the best elements for a finished product from all of its sites.

“My customer doesn’t care who did the final [three-dimensional] design,” Kuskowski said. “He doesn’t care where he was. He cares about the end product.”

But if someone does want a fast turnaround from a North American site, Wentworth can supply that as well. The company also retains most of its higher-technology tooling within North America, where the investments make the most sense.

“There is still a big role for North America,” he said. “There is still a role for Germany, where labor rates are even more expensive.”