A Mould Standards Setter

In an interview, the president of Progressive Components considers how standard mould components—and customers for them—come to be created.

Glenn Starkey: "The development of standards has changed mould building practice worldwide."

Progressive Components develops and supplies components for the production tooling industry. Its off-the-shelf standards are provided through a network of direct and regional distributors in North America, Europe and Asia. At Progressive headquarters in Wauconda, Illinois, near Chicago, Glenn Starkey serves as director of engineering and sales and company president. He took time to answer questions from *ETMM*.

ETMM: *Progressive Components is known for product development. What business conditions have supported standardization?*

Starkey: It used to be a mould maker would ask, "Why would I want to buy it if I can make my own mould components in-house?" But with specialization amongst departments coupled with a shortage of labour, the paradigm began to shift to "Why would I make it if I can buy it?" In addition, with components that are mass-produced, one can use advanced materials and coatings or treatments that wouldn't be economically practical for mould builders to apply on a one-time basis. Also, the availability of standard parts versus custom-created components offers mould users readily acquirable replacement parts.

What has your personal involvement with standard parts development been?

Prior to Progressive, I was involved with the development of a parametric mould design programme. I saw an opportunity to develop not only better software but also more preengineered items. The first standard mould lifter was my first patented off-the-shelf standard. Seeing that cycle-monitoring practices were nonexistent, we then developed the mechanical CounterView, and other products followed.

For a product to become an accepted standard, what factors are critical?

Two things: First is early customer involvement, including brainstorming about deficiencies with current standards or the conditions that lead to problematic mould performance; then, once a product begins taking shape, engaging customers in further shaping the product to meet specific needs.

Second, product testing is critical. Since 1995, we've worked closely with an independent testing lab that has a machine used for cycling various components. We test not only our products but those of competitors as well, so that we can surpass the others' performance and make decisions based on data rather than anecdotes and past practices.

Do you foresee new things emerging in the area of mould standards within the next 5 to 10 years?

We saw 10 years ago that a lot of mould buyers began thinking that a cheap mould was a smart purchase. Now though, we've seen a growing realization that the tool can be either a profitable investment or a troublesome expense. There is less of a disconnect now between the mould procurement team and those living with the mould. This means, for standard component suppliers worldwide, that there is a greater opportunity for proven products to become specified by those who are ultimately responsible for the mould's productivity.

» ***Progressive Components Europe Ltd.***
Oldham, Manchester, UK
www.procomps.com