The Technicalities of Winning an Award

By Allan Harari

Several years ago, we at Margapicta, an IAPD manufacturer member of cell cast acrylic in Indonesia, received, along with all IAPD members, an invitation to apply for the IAPD’s Environmental Committee Award. We were completely baffled that someone at the esteemed IAPD seriously believed there was an equation between a plastics company and the environment worth acknowledging with an award. Anyway — who had time to fill out the detailed application?

The following year, we received a second invitation that promised a streamlined application form. Since “streamlined” sounded good to us, we checked out previous winners — all legit companies — and thought we would give it a shot. Still, in our uncertainty, we were not alone.

“We do a lot and don’t realize how much we do,” said Erica Wright of Finger Lakes Extrusion Corp. “Completing the application for the first time made me realize how easy it would be for us to improve our positive impact on the environment. We had no idea what it would amount to since we are a small company and had never thought of tracking everything we do.”

Richard McDevitt of Interstate Plastics was already aware of their corporate commitment to the environment since they started recycling in 1990, but hadn’t tracked how many pounds of acrylic waste would never make it to the local dump. “Who knew how many parts per million of carbon dioxide were no longer pumped into the atmosphere since Interstate converted their company fleet from gasoline to hybrid vehicles?” All that notwithstanding, Interstate plowed through the application for the first time last year and waited.

The first time Margapicta submitted the application, we were blind because the terms were foreign, but we started with a simple list and a tally of our efforts. We weren’t collecting data, we didn’t have an “environmental program” in place — we were just doing it. We wrapped our application in a professionally looking digital cover and proudly clicked the submit button.

A few months later, at the IAPD Convention, there we stood; ready to hold the award in our hands. When they announced the 2014 award winners, we won nothing. Nada. Zip. Zilch.

Completing the environmental award application for the first time is not easy, but most applicants report how the format provides structure and reinforces what for many is an ad-hoc effort. “We didn’t have a formal recycling program and were overwhelmed by the thought of putting a program together,” said Wright. “The Environmental Committee gave us a link to www.wny sustainablebusiness.org that helped us formalize our efforts and make it easier for our managers and employees to participate — even simply putting out a blue recycle bin made a difference in our effort to raise awareness and make a difference. Now our team brings us ideas on how we can do more.”

Piedmont Plastics had been tracking much of the data required in the award application for internal purposes, but not all. “Last year, we were a first time applicant,” explained Pat Barrett. “We looked at the previous winners and understood what IAPD expected of us but we weren’t doing everything. With multiple branches, we didn’t have the mechanisms in place to properly complete the data.”

IAPD members who produce and distribute performance plastic products are regularly lumped into the much larger — and much less environmentally friendly — plastics industry when environmentalists, lobbyists and the general public take pot shots at “plastics.” The images are glaring — marine life strangled, suffocating piles of obsolete electronics, landfills bloated with plastic bags — but have nothing to do with the countless ways performance plastics is having a positive impact on our world.
The Environmental Committee is tasked with the vital role of raising awareness and changing that perspective in the general community and within our membership.

“A lot has changed since the first time we applied,” said Mark Shriver of Curbell Plastics, Inc. “We had very little experience in this area and quickly found there was no template to follow. In 2006 our chairman challenged us to become a sustainable business. Since then, we’ve improved and so has the Environmental Committee. The committee has developed and offers tools, resources, education, advice and encouragement. Through webinars and other communications, we have also explained and demonstrated the value proposition of how business sustainable best practices and their environmental benefits can have a positive impact on a brand as well as your bottom line.”

After Margacipta’s first “remarkable and outstanding” application resulted in nothing/nada/zippo/zilch, we also reached out to the Environmental Committee for feedback and support. The input was eye-opening and was shared with our technical and production teams. Much to our surprise, information and data also began flowing up to management. The next application was a year off, but completing the first application provided a springboard for improvement.

After we submitted our second application, our mood was markedly indifferent and we moved on with our business believing we still had no chance against the data metrics. However, we felt a lot different about how our “business sustainable best practices” were making a difference. Again, we were not alone.

“The first time we won was 2013,” said Kevin Mulligan of Cast Nylons Ltd. “We had a program in place for a couple of years prior, but who knew? It was just part of our overall facilities program. The award helped validate our efforts.”

In 2015, Margacipta received a Bronze Level Environmental Excellence Award. We are still baffled but now we and our customers have a better understanding of the role our performance plastics plays in the environment and the market place.

Here’s a list of last year’s winners:
- **Gold and Best Overall Program** Curbell Plastics, Inc.
- **Silver** Cast Nylons Ltd.; Cope Plastics, Inc.; Laird Plastics
- **Bronze** Interstate Plastics; Margacipta Wirasentosa, PT.; and Piedmont Plastics

This year’s IAPD Environment Award application is online. Looks complicated? Don’t have the time? Don’t think you have a shot? Take it. You might just be surprised by all that you’re doing now. Or you might be inspired to start a program, or increase what you’re currently doing. Many companies start with simple, straightforward recycling programs, then adopt additional environmentally friendly best practices once they start seeing the benefits and their employees support these efforts. The award application can help you assess what you are doing now, as well as provide ideas for your next steps. Plus, it’s a great way to share the good news about what you’re doing to be a green company in the performance plastics business. Give it a shot!

Allan Harari is president of Margacipta Wirasentosa, PT. and a volunteer with IAPD’s Environmental Committee. For more information, contact Margacipta Wirasentosa, PT., c/o American Trade Sales, Inc., 45 Rockefeller Plaza, Suite 2000, New York, NY 10111 USA; (201) 871-3610; fax (212) 899-5403, acrylics@otsglobal.net, www.margacipta.com.

---

**What’s next? More of the same. INCLUDING THE NAME: PALRAM**

There’s no shortage of brand and ownership changes these days. Want stability, continuous growth and innovation? Turn to Palram, the reliable source in the flat sheet industry. For more than 53 years, Palram’s ownership and name have remained constant. Like IAPD, we’re not going anywhere.

Learn more about our continued expansion at PalramAmericas.com/Still-Palram

800.999.9459 | www.palramAmericas.com | kutztown, pa, usa

© 2016 Palram Americas.