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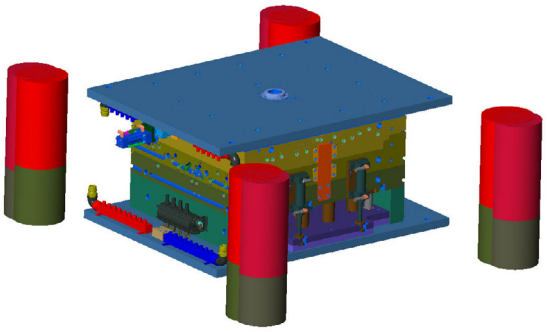
Mastering the Shift: 7 Key Points to Consider When Transferring Injection Molds from Suppliers



When deciding to move injection molds from one supplier to another, there are several points you should consider in advance. The ideal solution is one in which the existing supplier, new supplier, and customer can openly communicate while maintaining all customer deliverables in the process. However, having a supplier with mold transfer experience is exceptionally invaluable when this is not possible.

There is no substitute for experience and comprehensive planning to ensure a successful transition.

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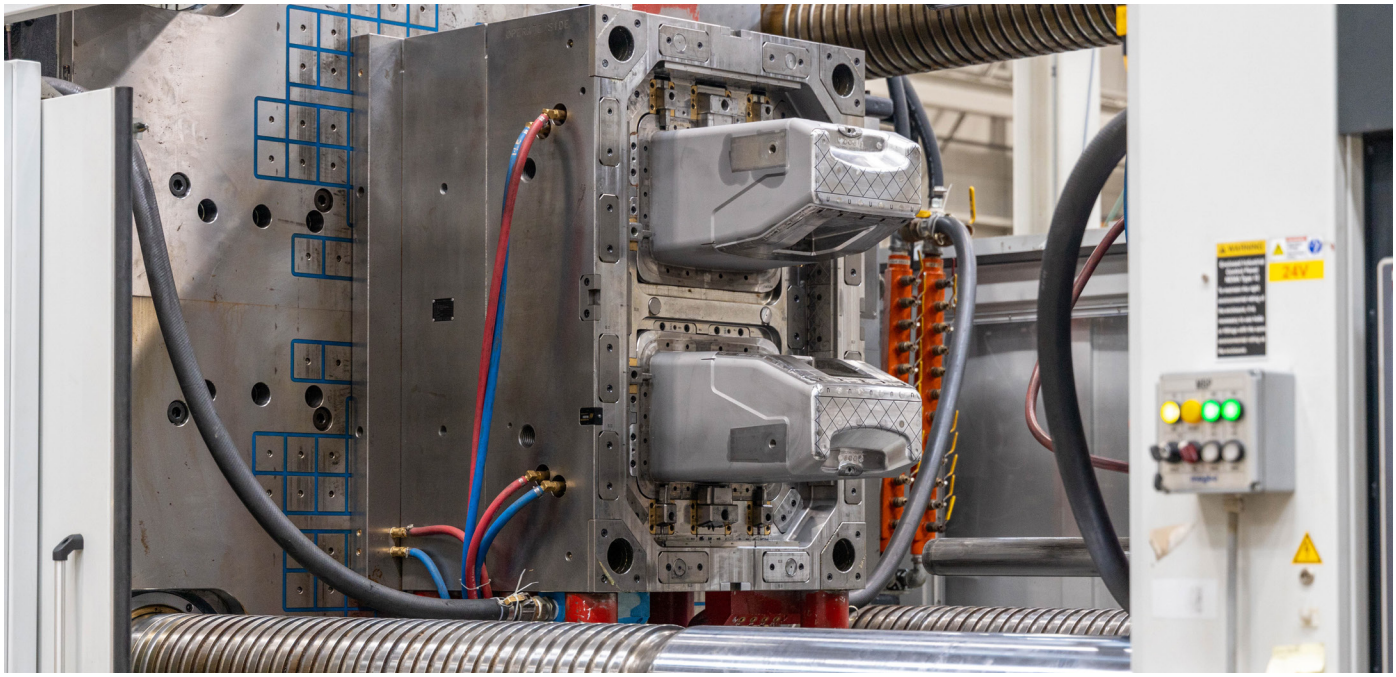
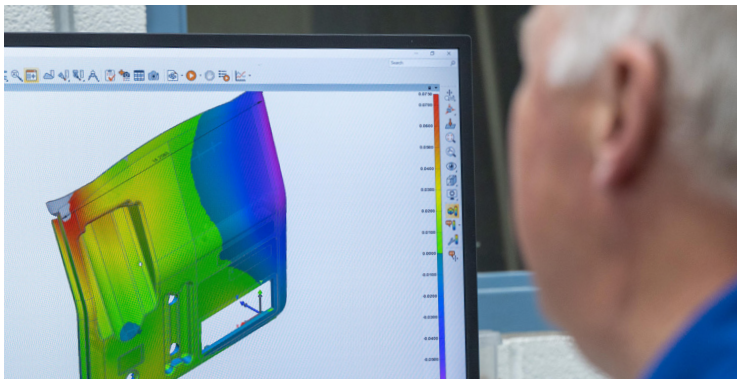
The following Mold Transfer Guidelines provide key points to consider when transferring molds:



1 Establish a sufficient buffer of inventory before transferring the business.

Doing so will cover the time necessary for the new supplier to put the essential provisions in place to transact future business uninterrupted. If the buffer is too small, it will put undue pressure on all parties, requiring alternative plans without sufficient execution time.



2 Current Supplier:

Document all assets and specifications before moving tools.

- Plan to give ample time to complete final orders and manage the transfer.
- Collect documentation. Share updated mold designs reflecting the current part revision level and basic tool data.

Basic Tool/Part Data Includes:

- External mold dimensions
- Stack height requirements
- Shot size
- Tonnage required
- Product and process qualification information
- Mold maintenance records
- Past and present quality concerns

- Collect and inventory all customer-specific information and property, including:
  - Molds/Tooling
  - Components such as inserts, screws, tape, gaskets, etc.
  - Auxiliary equipment such as end-of-arm tooling, hot runner controllers, etc.
  - Unique raw materials not consumed in fulfilling remaining open orders
  - Special gages, fixtures, equipment
- Make sure all assets are identified, tagged, and recorded based on associated part numbers.
- Photograph all assets.

3 New Supplier:

Review/inspect all assets & documentation, develop plans, prepare for production

- Inspect and clean (if needed) customer property. Verify and record that all customer property has been received and nothing has been damaged in transit.
- Evaluate and document mold wear.
- Identify any required repairs or tool modifications needed.
- Address tool life warranty. Many companies want a guarantee that the tool will last for a certain amount of cycles. Transferred tools commonly need to have some level of refurbishment in order for the new supplier to be able to give any guarantee on the lifetime of the tool.
- Develop a preliminary preventative mold maintenance schedule.
- Plan time for retrofitting. Modifications will be needed to adapt the tool to the new injection machine, such as electrical connections, water, and hydraulic fittings.

- Procure needed raw materials, specialty tooling, and equipment.
- Develop and complete DOEs, control plans, process FMEAs, work instructions, first article inspections, capability studies of control dimensions, and Gauge R & R studies.
- Qualify the molds/parts being transferred.
- Receive final part approval from the customer before production start-up.

4 Obtain clear deliverables for quality, delivery, service, and costs.

The new supplier and the customer should be on the same page regarding the expected deliverables. This approach helps establish project timelines and provides the essential foundation for measuring the future relationship.

5 Establish critical lines of communication.

Define the important contacts in the areas of Quality, Engineering, Manufacturing, Purchasing, and Customer Service. Streamlining communications will ensure the proper parties are aware of critical deliverables.

6 Establish visual cosmetic standards for all parts.

It's best to create boundary samples to avoid interpretation errors later on. The goal is to eliminate subjectivity as much as possible on both sides (supplier and customer).

7 Customer should clearly identify and communicate all known problems to the new supplier.

If possible, retain the last "acceptable" shot (part and runner attached, if applicable) off of each mold before transferring. This visual sample will provide essential information to the new supplier regarding the current mold condition and customer acceptance standards. Preferably, parts should be untouched as they are molded before any secondary operations. This last shot should be inspected by the new supplier and matched against the customer's current quality acceptance standards for conformance (i.e., all notes, dimensions, and cosmetic attributes). Noted deviations will require customer disposition to assure all acceptance documentation matches the approved customer signed off "golden" sample.

Full disclosure is essential in meeting short and long-term goals. This information should include part history as well as the current status.

Together with your newly vetted supplier, develop an action plan to resolve any outstanding problems in accordance with future production needs, and prioritize in order of importance. This step provides a foundation on which to build a successful relationship.

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