



Extrusion Solutions

THE LATEST EXTRUDING NEWS FROM ENTEK



Southern California-Based Color Compounder Uses ENTEK for Masterbatch, Concentrates for Lighting and Optics Applications

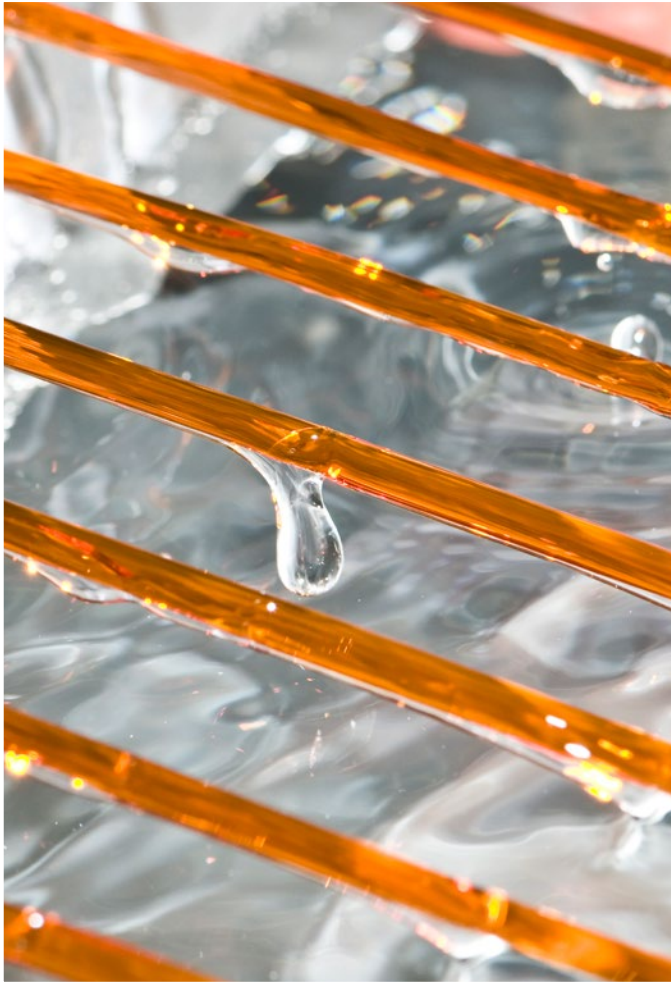


When it comes to producing the highest quality compounded materials for the lighting and optics industries, OptiColor is an expert in the field. Founded in 1995 by Daniel Neufeld in Huntington Beach, California, OptiColor specializes in producing small-to-medium sized lots of colored and tinted materials for some of the world's leading lighting and eyewear companies.

Because of the inability to produce highly-concentrated compounds in-house on their single-screw extruders, Dan Neufeld reached out to ENTEK in 2012 and made the trip up the coast to Lebanon, Oregon to visit the company and learn more about their twin-screw extruders. After running material trials at ENTEK's In-House Pilot Plant, he made a call to Jim Drew, OptiColor's Plant Manager.

"'We're buying an ENTEK', he said," laughed Jim in a recent interview. "I had joined Dan early on when he was preparing to expand the business, and Dan always wanted a twin-screw to help us compound more materials in-house. After running the trials at ENTEK's plant, he was sold."

Jim went up to ENTEK as well and tested several materials on the twin-



screw. "I was impressed by the helpfulness and thorough training provided by ENTEK," he said. "We purchased a 40mm machine that year and have been running it ever since. It has really helped us grow our business."

Bringing More Business In-House

Until 2012, OptiColor was producing compounds in-house on their single-screw extruders, but these machines were only suitable for running small amounts of colorants (2% or less) with the virgin resin. After purchasing the new ENTEK twin-screw extruder, the company began running materials that were heavily loaded with up to 50% colorants and additives.

Doing the heavy duty mixing on the ENTEK machine helps keep the plant clean, and OptiColor takes pride in running a clean operation. "A clean shop leads to clean materials, and no cross-contamination of products," said Jim Drew. "That's extremely important in our business."

In addition to cleanliness, the ENTEK twin-screw extruder opened up new possibilities for OptiColor. The machine has helped OptiColor make products for their own internal use that they used to have to go outside the company to get. Concentrates & masterbatches are now produced both for customers and for OptiColor's own in-house use on the ENTEK machine.

It's the People

Since installing the new ENTEK machine in 2012, OptiColor has visited ENTEK several times to run additional trials over the years. "ENTEK has some of the nicest people we've ever worked with," said Jim Drew. "Anyone at ENTEK will help you no matter what your question is – they are very willing to help with any problems or questions you have. They always follow up, call you back, and never leave you hanging."

Future Plans

The materials processed at OptiColor for lighting, lens and eyewear applications include acrylics, nylons, and polycarbonates, mixing with colorants and additives that are proprietary. The advent of LED lighting has driven a lot of new product development at the company.

The 40mm ENTEK machine that OptiColor purchased in 2012 was the right machine for them at the time; they process mostly small lots of materials, and it's not unusual for them to produce 50-200lb lots. The 40mm machine was ideal for this and also robust enough to support their small to large production quantities.

"We're looking at a second, larger ENTEK machine to support our rapid growth in markets we serve that require high quality concentrates," said Jim Drew. "Our niche is producing specialty colors and small lots with concentrate production quantities ranging from 300 to 50,000 lbs. As we continue to grow and the time comes to add another twin-screw extruder, we would start with ENTEK."

