

Case Study / Mold Components

Guaranteeing What You Sell

Mold monitoring, done right, can protect mold builders while strengthening customer relationships.

By Lorena Magnelli Fisher

No one knows better than a mold builder that when a small company sells something very expensive to a large company, it's a big liability.

Standing behind what one sells is riskier than ever in today's globally competitive market. Yet that's exactly what OEMs and molders increasingly expect, because they also are looking to de-risk their tooling investments. This puts the mold builder at a disadvantage, as he typically doesn't have visibility of the mold nor any control or influence over how it is run and maintained once it is delivered to the customer. As a result, any issues with the mold come back to the mold builder in the form of "no-charge" repairs and a tarnished reputation.

A Win-Win Solution

Fortunately, mold builders can implement a kind of "insurance policy" that travels with every mold they build in the form of a mold monitoring device such as the CVe Monitor. This device from AST Technology can provide real-time reports of a mold's activity from anywhere in the world, and generating these reports can be as easy as checking email or learning a friend's status on Facebook. The monitor is installed on the mold to not only track cycle counts, but scheduled preventive maintenance, mold efficiency and unscheduled downtime as well.

The latest edition of the monitor also records the device's removal from the tool for any reason (cleaning, for example) and alerts users when preventive maintenance is due or overdue. Mold documentation materials, including setup sheets, drawings, instructional videos, maintenance requirements, checklists and more can be uploaded via a built-in, 4-GB flash drive. CVe Live, a hardware/cloud platform, provides OEMs and molders with secure access to up-to-the-minute mold activity reports from the monitor via press modules and gateway hardware.

All of these features serve to protect the mold builder and provide advantages to the customers who are running the molds—a win-win solution.

Molds Have a Voice

Mold builders, molders and OEMs have a common enemy: unscheduled mold stoppages. Whether approached proactively or because a



Image courtesy of Janler Corp.

Chuck Klingler of Janler Corp. stands next to a mold fitted with a CVe Monitor from AST Technology. The company installs a monitor into every mold it builds. Its flash drive contains mold drawings, setup sheets and maintenance specifications to ensure customers always get optimal performance from the mold.

customer specifies the device, mold monitoring is a mold builder's opportunity to obtain the history of molds in production. For example, Clearwater, Florida-based moldmaker/molder American Tool and Mold (ATM) has proactively used mold monitoring to augment its mold warranties for more than a year now.

According to ATM Director of Sales Phil Gaitan, using a mold monitoring system is an inexpensive way to gain visibility of what is going on in the field with the tools the company builds and runs.

"We were introduced to the monitoring system by one of our OEM customers," Gaitan explains. "We were building a multi-mold international program, and the OEM specified a CVe monitor for every mold."

An issue arose regarding a warranty claim on one of the molds that was then returned to ATM. "We tore it down, cleaned it and analyzed the mold using the monitor. We downloaded the mold activity data from the OnDemand website, and, before long, we built a case for what we knew was causing the issues. The mold was repaired, sent back to the customer and it's been running fine ever since," Gaitan says. "The CVe Monitor gave us an 'authoritative view' of the manufacturing conditions the mold was subjected to. Molds can now speak."

That "Aha" Moment

Similarly, Janler Corp. relates how one mold caused the Chicago-based mold builder to realize the value of proactively installing a monitor on a mold.

"We delivered a beautiful, 48-cavity mold to a good customer," Vice President Chuck Klingler says. "This mold was sample-run at Janler, ready for production."

Weeks went by with little communication, and then the customer called Janler to report that it could not get the mold running. The mold was shipped back to Janler and set up in the same molding machine with the same processing specifications provided, and it ran like clockwork. So what had happened?

"We found small but critical differences between our in-house molding processes and the customer's, which showed that a machine spec/capacity was the issue and not the mold," Klingler explains.

"This was the 'aha' moment. I thought the CVE monitor was a benefit only to molders or OEMs. Now we store our processing specs and drawings on the monitor device to ensure our molds are run and maintained per our instructions, no matter where they are. I can't understand why every mold builder wouldn't want to do the same."

"We're all trying to stay on the cutting edge of things," ATM's Gaitan adds. "You're looking at anything and everything you can do to get energy out of steel, quicker cycle times, etc., but some details like mold monitoring are not properly focused on, and they should be."

An Invaluable Resource

"Using mold monitors to track preventive maintenance and record reasons for tool failures and issues is invaluable," Gaitan says. "If you use the data to your advantage, it helps with warranty claims and allows you to work with the molder to make decisions on maintenance. The result is that we all work smarter together."

ATM President Demetre Loulourgas immediately understood the benefits of such a system when it was proposed by the OEM.

"Demetre decided that we would implement the CVE Monitor on every tool designed and manufactured by ATM," Gaitan says. "We are a tool builder and molder; we have to practice what we preach, so even the tools we build and run at ATM are specified and equipped with CVE Monitors."

Mike Armstrong, the company's IT director and CVE programmer, comments, "When we started using the CVE Monitor with the OnDemand software, we could set up target cycle counts and preventive maintenance schedules. And, if the mold is not running, the device shows that as well. We also can retrofit the monitor on our older tools, put in the drawings for easy access, track older tools and get the important data (no matter how small) to help keep them running optimally."

"Training is simple and straightforward, and can be accomplished with customers onsite and during qualification," Gaitan explains. "If you implement this technology the right way, the opportunity is enormous for the molder, OEM and mold builder."

Already, more than 100 OEMs are specifying the CVE Mold Management System. These systems give mold builders the opportunity to proactively meet customer requirements while also ensuring a more profitable and promising future for their companies. [MMT](#)

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