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Adler CEO Philipp Gruner at NPE2024.
Plastics News photo by Tom Nicol

Toolmaker Adler invests in new facility as it ramps up hiring, capacity

By Don Loepp
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Erie, Pa. — Toolmaker Adler Industrial Solutions Inc. is investing in growth at its newly opened manufacturing site in Erie, where company leaders say strong demand, reshoring and customer trust are fueling expansion.

The company recently moved into the 61,000-square-foot facility at 8251 Hamot Road, which includes room for future expansion, a product solutions lab and dedicated space for a growing apprenticeship program. "This year has been gangbusters for us," CEO Philipp Gruner said. "We're scaling up to meet demand, and we're optimistic about the rest of 2025 and beyond."

Gruner and his team spoke with *Plastics News* during a recent site visit to the Erie facility. The building opened in February and is now home to Rapid Mold Solutions, one of Adler's three U.S. toolmaking locations. The others are in Kansas City, Mo., and Lee's Summit, Mo., which houses R&D/Leverage, a blow mold specialist and turnkey injection mold operation acquired in 2022.

New location, renewed purpose

Gruner launched Adler to address what he saw as fragmentation in the mold supply chain — and the delays and frustrations that came with it.

"I spent 20 years on the other side, launching products and managing mold builds," he said. "I wanted to solve the problem of coordinating multiple mold shops just to get a product to market."

The new Erie site consolidates local operations into a single, high-efficiency facility and adds capabilities for engineering, sampling, metrology and training. It also reflects Adler's investment in people.

"The building is great, but it's the people that matter," said Tom Hartline, senior operations leader at Adler. "We've hired experienced toolmakers, machinists and engineers, and we're building a culture around teamwork and long-term vision."

'One-stop shop' for complex tools

Adler focuses on technically demanding tooling for injection molding, blow molding, liquid silicone rubber, two-shot, insert



Tom Hartline, senior operations leader at Adler.

molding and other applications. It specializes in high-cavitation molds, family tools and quick-turn prototype builds.

While most mold shops in North America specialize in one process, Adler's strategy is to offer customers a single source for tooling across product platforms.

"Every mold is custom," Gruner said. "We want to be the shop that can handle the hard jobs — the ones with tight tolerances, complex geometry or aggressive timelines."

The Erie plant includes an in-house product solutions lab for mold sampling and part qualification, along with CT scanning for dimensional validation. The facility is tied into Adler's corporate engineering system, allowing real-time data and file sharing across its U.S. locations and with its facility in the United Kingdom.

Surge in quoting, reshoring interest

Hartline and Gruner said the company has seen a surge in requests for quotes in recent months, driven partly by supply chain uncertainty and newly announced tariffs on imported tooling.

"We're getting calls from customers who say they're done with China," Hartline said. "They're looking for reliable domestic partners. We're seeing more quoting activity — and more orders."

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Plastics News photos by Don Loepp



Growth fueled by strategy, selective M&A

Adler has grown both organically and through acquisition. The company seeks shops with at least \$10 million in revenue and a stable management team. It then emphasizes cultural fit and complementary customer bases.

"We're not looking to be the biggest, but we want to be the best," Gruner said. "When we bring a company in, we spend the first 90 days observing and learning. Then we work together to raise the bar."

Gruner said future expansion could include a location in Central Europe to serve global customers locally and learn from European manufacturing efficiencies.

Building the next generation of toolmakers

The company is also investing in talent development. Adler has launched a formal apprenticeship program in Erie and is part-

nering with local schools to bring students into manufacturing careers.

"There's a brain drain in this industry, and we want to be part of the solution," Hartline said. "We're not just hiring — we're training, mentoring and building careers."

"There's a lot of talk about workforce development — we're doing it," he added.

Gruner said his goal is for Adler to be known as "the best place to learn mold making."

"If someone goes through our apprenticeship, I want every shop in the country to want to hire them," Gruner said. "Even if they don't stay with us, we'll be proud of what they've built."

Adler currently has one apprentice working at its Erie facility and another scheduled to start this month, with plans to grow the site's program to three or four apprentices by the end of the year. Companywide, Adler has about 10 apprentices in total.

"I want this to be the gold standard for apprenticeships in mold making," Gruner said.

Looking ahead

With Adler's strong backlogs, new customer programs and a skilled team in place, Gruner said he expects continued growth in 2026 and beyond.

"We're not trying to win with the lowest price," he said. "We're winning with quality, capability and trust — and customers are responding to that."