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A blog for the medical device industry

Have You Checked the Green Box?

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In a show-floor meeting yesterday at MD&M West, the folks at **Mack Molding** told me about some of the steps they've taken to become a more sustainable supplier to the medical device industry.

Some of the efforts the Arlington, VT-based custom plastics molder and contract manufacturer has taken include environmental initiatives, such as minimizing and recycling the corrugated cardboard it uses for packaging; building bat houses to combat depletion of the bat populations in North America due to a disease known as white nose syndrome; and installing apiaries at two of its plants to help alleviate colony collapse disorder, a mysterious ailment killing honey bees. Others, such as building a community garden with 15 raised beds, adding volleyball courts, and clearing 1.6 miles of hiking trails behind one of its facilities, are centered around making Mack Molding a better place for its employees to work.

It would be easy to write those efforts off as a PR stunt or the idealistic actions of a bunch of Vermont treehuggers, but president Jeff Somple says it was actually the company's customers who were the impetus for some of these things. Johnson & Johnson was one of the first to push the company to post its sustainability policy on its Web site, for example.

"ISO used to be the check mark that [OEMs] wanted you to have," says Mack Molding's Julie Horst. "Today, that new check box is sustainable manufacturing."

As medical device makers outsource more of their operations to contract manufacturers, she says they're increasingly trying to make sure those partners fall in line with the OEMs' own sustainability policies.

"It's going to be very much a part of how you do business going forward," Somple says.

But he insists that throwing money around in the name of making your operations more sustainable is beside the point. Any sustainability efforts need to be cost neutral at the very least.

"If we add all this up, it's actually saving us money, not costing us money," Somple says.

Jamie Hartford is the managing editor of MD+DI.

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