

Rising stars see plenty of room for growth in plastics

By: Frank Esposito

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LAKE LAS VEGAS, NEV. — The plastics industry's rising stars rose to the occasion at the 2015 *Plastics News* Executive Forum — but they probably won't be reading about it on Twitter.

Of the four-person panel, Kim Holmes said she was trying to use the social media network more,

Michael Lipton said his firm had hired someone to do so, and Bryan Campbell and Jay Kumar said they barely used Twitter at all.

"I've read maybe six tweets in my life," said Kumar, president of Massachusetts-based thermoformers Universal Plastics Corp. and Mayfield Plastics Inc. "I just don't think you can say that much in 140 characters."

The foursome — each age 40 or younger — also shared their thoughts on non-Twitter topics at the event, Feb. 4-5 in Lake Las Vegas.

"The younger generation is concerned about environmental issues," said Holmes, senior director of recycling and diversion the Washington-based Society of the Plastics Industry Inc. "The two issues that come up about plastics are inconsistent access to recycling — which leads to the image that a plastic might not be able to be recycled — and plastics' persistence in the environment. It can stay for a long time."

At age 35, Kumar already is president of two firms. He and his father Sunil bought Universal in 2012 and added Mayfield in 2013. "Manufacturing is an incredibly promising field to young entrepreneurs," he said. "There's a lot of innovation in plastics in particular. Manufacturing tends to get overlooked, but there's a lot of opportunity there."

Lipton is director of plastics for the Arizona Pacific Plastics LLC business of

recycling firm Recycle 1. That firm began in paper recycling before moving into plastics. "Paper recycling was easier than plastics, because it's less complicated," he said. "But we're now recycling 30 million pounds of plastics per year. A lot of companies are still putting good [plastics] recycling material in the trash."

Campbell, president of the southern division of injection molder Mack Molding Co., said that his firm is reaching out to younger people by working with high schools and offering internships.

"We need to build for the future and set tangible goals," he added.

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