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## New president hopes to make Mack more cohesive

By Patrick McArdle  
STAFF WRITER | September 08, 2014

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Jeff Somple of Manchester is the new president of all of Mack Molding.

ARLINGTON — Jeff Somple of Manchester has been named president of all of Mack Molding, including their Arlington manufacturing plant and plants in North Carolina and South Carolina, which Somple believes will make the company more valuable to its customers.

Somple has been president of what the company calls “Mack North” for 12 years. That part of the company grew close to 10 percent for the second year in a row last year and jobs were added in Bennington County.

Somple said “Mack South” has also been doing well and recently, for the first time, the demographics have shifted and the majority of the company’s 1,100 employees work below the Mason-Dixon line.

While Mack North and South will still be separate divisions, Somple said on Wednesday he thinks the change in organization, which also affects Mack Prototype in Massachusetts and Synectic, an engineering services group in Connecticut, will make Mack more cohesive.

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“We used to operate almost like separate companies and now I think we can be a little bit smarter and we can do what’s best for our customers, our employees and our stakeholders and not necessarily be geographically driven,” he said.

Instead of someone from Mack North or South trying to bring a job into their own plant, Somple said, the company as a whole can consider what works best for the customer which could help land them a competitive bid.

“There’s always been some competition between North and South and I think if there is any that lingers, it will be friendly. Maybe we’ll bet some Georgia peaches against some New England apples or something,” he said.

Mack South is more “traditional,” Somple said. They’ve been successful molding parts, painting them and shipping them out, but Somple said he thinks they can offer more.

“What I hope to bring to them is a little strategy and vision. We’ve taken Mack over the last 12 years and reinvented it, in terms of ‘If we’re going to survive in this economy as a North American manufacturer, we’re going to have to do some things differently,’” he said.

Somple said those strategies have included adding an engineering firm to the company and offering machining to “complete the cycle” and offer customers a complete package.

The Arlington plant has needed to be creative to overcome challenges like higher energy costs and fewer available trained employees. Those who promote economic development in Vermont often tout the “quality of life” but Somple said that’s not always enough.

“I really think as a state we’re overdepending on that a little bit. After a while, it’s wonderful to have this great place to live and to work and to play but you still have to be able to pay your bills and afford a house which is getting out of reach for a lot of young professionals. If you’re a young professional, you still want to have a social life,” he said.

Employees will be coming to work at a company that has more internal movement. Somple has spoken in the past about attracting qualified employees but has also taken steps to reach out to local young people, including an internship program that had more than 20 participants this summer. Now, Mack will have more options to offer young professionals because of the increased integration among the divisions.

Somple and his wife, China, have three daughters, Samantha, a senior at Burr and Burton Academy, and Jessica and Kristen, who are BBA graduates.

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**TODAY'S WEATHER MINUTE:** First colder temperatures of the changing seasons arrives from Canada in the coming week, expected to be felt in much of the country east of the Rockies; researchers say animal and plant extinctions are on extreme rise.



**RICHARD'S POOR ALMANACK:** Peter the Great levies a tax on beards, following the lead of earlier monarch, England's Henry VIII. On this day, The Great London Fire is quelled and, in 1877, Lakota Chief Crazy Horse is killed at Fort Robinson, Nebraska.



**A VISIT TO VERMONT STATE FAIR:** Herald photographer Anthony Edwards visits the Vermont State Fair and files his video report on some of the sights and sounds to be experienced there.



**RICHARD'S POOR ALMANACK:** On this day in 1189, Richard the Lionheart is crowned king of England, succeeding his father, Henry II. In 1752, Great Britain including the American colonies adopts the Gregorian calendar, losing 11 days causing time wrinkle.



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