

Building Better Barriers

Professional Plastics works closely with retail and foodservice clients to design solutions to protect people.



THE PANDEMIC FORCED BUSINESSES TO RETHINK THEIR OPERATIONS TO PREVENT TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19 AND TO MAKE PEOPLE FEEL SAFE ONCE THEY REOPENED.

PROFESSIONAL PLASTICS

www.professionalplastics.com | 800.966.PROS | HEADQUARTERS: Fullerton, Calif.

SPECIALTY: Plastics distributor and fabricator | **BEST PRACTICE:** Empowering employees to exceed customer expectations

Mark Casey, president — North America: “When choosing Professional Plastics, you get a barrier customized to your personal expectations and an appearance that complements your facility. When you buy online, you’re usually getting a one-size-fits all product.”



AS A FOODSERVICE OR RETAIL LEADER, YOU PROBABLY began the year 2020 with high hopes and big plans for your business.

Then came the pandemic, and the old rules and priorities seemed to change overnight. Businesses had to rethink their operations to prevent transmission of COVID-19 and make people feel safe once they reopened.

Clear plastic barriers were needed, and businesses scrambled in the same way a frantic homeowner with an emergency might: They ran to the nearest home improvement or hardware store, or searched online for whatever was available.

“The whole plastic environment with barriers and PPE [personal protective equipment] supplies changed dramatically in March of last year, and it started in retail settings,” recalls Mark Casey, president — North America for Professional Plastics. “Many of the retail venues that were still open started installing barriers to stop the spread of the virus at any public-facing positions.”

Owners were challenged to find what they needed to protect their space, and many bought, or built, whatever they could quickly to keep their business afloat.

Those makeshift barriers took them only so far, however. To find something that lasted longer and looked better, many companies turned to Professional Plastics, a leading plastics supplier known for its innovative solutions and high-touch customer service.

“The big companies obviously have a lot of resources, and they were probably much more

proactive and organized in their approach,” Casey says. “But there are a lot of smaller, independent stores, restaurants and bars, and they had to be creative. A lot of them reached out to us.”

One of them was Nick Pitillo, owner of restaurants Villaggio and Osteria 166 in New York. “I needed plastic barriers to meet the [state’s] guidelines and reopen for indoor dining,” he says. “The barriers from Professional Plastics literally saved my business.”

Pitillo estimates he would have lost at least 50% of his restaurants’ winter revenue without the barriers. “Professional Plastics went above and beyond to help design and install the barriers seamlessly,” he describes. “As things evolved, the order kept changing, but the customer service was amazing and they made sure every detail — from taking measurements to applying our logo — was taken care of as quickly as possible.”

Professional Plastics has two advantages when customers like Pitillo come calling. One is that it is well-versed in the needs of the industry and has supplied cutting boards, signage substrates, sneeze guards, display cases and a variety of other parts and products to restaurants and OEMs for more than 35 years.

Second, the company lives up to the “plastics” in its name. Professional Plastics is a leading supplier of plastic sheet, rod, tube, film and fabricated parts, and an authorized distributor for more than 200 brands. The company’s 22 locations in the United States, Singapore and Taiwan offer the

largest inventory of high-performance plastic materials as well as value-added services like precision cutting and fabrication. The family-owned company is committed to providing its customers with the best selection, service and pricing.

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— NICK PITILLO

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

About a year ago, Casey recalls, “There was a huge demand for barriers fabricated to customers’ specifications, or they were asking for us to provide a custom solution. There was also a large demand for PPE supplies, ranging anywhere from a plastic face shield to disposable face masks, gloves and gowns, so we pivoted our business to meet those needs.”

To make it easier for customers to get what they needed in one place, Professional Plastics added PPE supplies to its inventory and developed dozens of barrier, shield and guard options customers could buy online. The company also understood this wasn’t a one-size-fits all situation and made sure it was ready for customers’ unique requirements.

Professional Plastics can provide custom design services, which makes it a fit for customers looking for solutions that not only work but look good. “Some just want to put up something so they can open and operate,” Casey says. “But some are very specific on the design and the look because they want their facility to have a certain impression on their customer base. There is a lot of custom work done to meet those expectations.”

Professional Plastics’ services have been in steady demand since the first lockdowns, although it has ebbed and flowed somewhat, particularly as individual states implemented or relaxed restrictions and local businesses reopened or shut down again.

The response led by the 50 states “was all over the place and to a certain extent there is



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still a lot of disorganization,” Casey notes. “Different parts of the country reacted differently. For example, New York and California established significant guidelines while other states are more lax in their guidelines.”

But no matter what restrictions state and local governments do or don’t put on the private sector, Casey says Professional Plastics can custom-design and install cost-effective solutions for customers that will last — even after the pandemic lifts.

“We’re one of the largest suppliers of clear acrylic and polycarbonate sheet in the country, so our buying power for the raw material substrate is one of the greatest in the United States,” he explains. “We also have in-house capabilities to make the barriers ourselves, so the supply, pricing and the value you’re getting for your investment is higher.”

Casey notes a key difference in working with Professional Plastics is “You get a barrier customized to your personal expectations and an appearance that complements your facility. When you buy online, you’re usually getting a one-size-fits all product. It works, but it might not fit your design criteria or the appearance that you want in your facility.”

One recent client was Amalie Arena, the temporary home of the NBA’s Toronto Raptors. The 20,500-capacity venue in Tampa, Fla., wanted effective press box, bar table and locker room barriers that fit their aesthetic.



PROFESSIONAL PLASTICS WORKS CLOSELY WITH CLIENTS TO ENSURE IT MEETS THEIR SAFETY NEEDS AND STYLE PREFERENCES.

The company had similar success at the Mesa Verde Country Club in California. General Manager Jeremy Samson explains Professional Plastics built and installed free-standing barriers in many different areas around the club, including its golf shop, reception lobby, dining reception and members' locker rooms.

"The barriers were measured and custom made using unique leg designs that provided easy set up and easy removal for cleaning," Samson says. "The installation was done using Professional Plastics' unique aluminum bracket installation technique, which eliminated the

“Unique leg designs provided easy set up and easy removal for cleaning.” – JEREMY SAMSON

need for drilling into the work surface and allows for easy removal.”

On jobs big or small, Professional Plastics works closely with clients to ensure it meets their safety needs as well as matches their style preferences. From material selection through design and installing the final product, the experts at Professional Plastics are there to help bring a customer's vision to life.

"The thing that makes us a success is our people," Casey explains, "and educating them and empowering them, teaching them to always identify our value proposition and how we can differentiate ourselves from our competition."

"But to take care of the customer and continue to strive to exceed their expectations — I would say that differentiates us the most."

Casey is optimistic about his customers in retail and foodservice, even hoping that they can pick up where they left off in March of last year.

"The market will continue to change and evolve, but everybody is very resilient and will get through this," he predicts. "We're here to help, and I think businesses will rebound very quickly and a resurgence is on the horizon."



PROFESSIONAL PLASTICS' PORTFOLIO INCLUDES WORK PERFORMED FOR TAMPA'S AMALIE ARENA (ABOVE AND BELOW), WHERE IT DESIGNED, BUILT AND INSTALLED BARRIERS IN LOCKER ROOMS AND OTHER AREAS.

