

A working day in the life of Danny Dunn, Extrusion Product Manager, Castool Tooling Solutions

Danny Dunn is Extrusion Product Manager for Castool Tooling Solutions, based in Uxbridge, Ontario. Castool are a leading supplier of equipment and consumables to the global aluminium extrusion industry.

I woke at 6 am, rolled out of bed, and immediately turned on my computer. I had received several e-mails during the night from home, the US, and Asia. Some were simply to update me on ongoing projects at Castool, others about new opportunities, and a couple about problems that required my comment.

When I'm at home, I usually head to a local swimming pool for a few fast laps before going to the plant, but today I found myself in a small hotel near Verona in northern Italy. I came here last week to promote Castool Extrusion Tooling products at Metef. The show was not too well attended this year, but we did make some worthwhile contacts. By now I expected to be back in Canada, but towards the end of last week something completely unexpected occurred, a long dormant volcano in Iceland suddenly erupted, sending clouds of black smoke and volcanic ash over much of Western Europe and temporarily grounding all air traffic. Now I'm waiting for a flight in a few days, and I didn't even know that Iceland had a volcano.

One advantage in Castool being a Global supplier is that no matter where I am there always seems to be some Castool customers fairly close by. It therefore just took me a short time to call several extruders and set up 3 days of visits. Everyone appeared pleased that I was in the area and coming to see their plant.

After making the appointments, I went downstairs for breakfast, and had a cappuccino and a sticky bun in a plastic wrapper. I always thought that Italy had great food, but I have stayed in quite a few business hotels in Italy, and been rather disillusioned to find that for breakfast all seem to include that same sticky bun in the wrapper. Certainly, however, their coffee has to be among the best in the world.

Then I went outside to a beautiful spring day. It was quite warm. The weather here must be at least a month ahead of the weather in Toronto. Fortunately the car I rented had a GPS. I punched in the address of a local extruder that 4 years ago had installed some Castool die heaters for 2 presses and headed out on the highway.

The drive was absolutely beautiful. I drove by Lake Garda and then headed east into the mountains. The extruder is a member of a large global group of extruders. Their best practice team audited these die heaters just 2 weeks before my visit. Die temperatures were still within + or - 5 °C of set point. The dies were never overheated, and times to temperature were still as per the original algorithms. I was welcomed with open arms, given a quick tour, and taken for lunch. I lunched with several members of their management team. The small restaurant was set on the side of a mountain overlooking Lake Garda. The view was memorable and the meal was great.

Then I headed west to a press manufacturer. This company had used our stems and dummy blocks on their presses for several years, but had never



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installed our quick response (QR) containers. I gave what was supposed to be a short presentation, but we had such a good discussion about our QR container and about Castool, that it lasted nearly 3 hours.

"The temperature of the billet should be very closely controlled from the time it is heated until it passes through a uniformly heated die. This is best done by immediately correcting any variations in the container liner. Think of ripples instead of waves. In the QR Container, with at least four temperature control zones, vertical as well as horizontal, cartridge heaters are located very close to the liner. Their purpose is to heat the liner, not the mantle, and thus maintain a consistent billet temperature as the alloy enters the die. Experience has also shown that the QR Container can reduce the amount of energy used by more than 75%."

They were also particularly interested in Castool's belief that better extrusion is done by better

extruders, that the operator should always have complete control of his entire production system, and that the most comprehensive and sophisticated digitised system can never compare in real value with the intuition of a talented experienced press operator.

In Verona, I went for a short walk and found a small authentic Italian pizza restaurant. I had an Italian beer, a pizza with an egg on top, and a dessert that definitely was not on my diet plan. I finished dinner with some 'tonic' that was supposed to be good for my stomach. I'm not sure what it did to my stomach, but I certainly slept well that night.

At the hotel, I received confirmation that I was to fly home on Thursday, 7 days later than planned. I left from Verona and flew to Toronto via Frankfurt; my week in Verona was beneficial for my customers and Castool, and rather enjoyable for me.

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