

'Hydration Vessel' seeks to siphon status market

By Rhoda Miel
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PHOENIX — Timing, says Alice Griffin, is everything when it comes to launching a new material successfully.

For Eastman Chemical Co., its launch of Tritan copolyester resin in November came at just the right time. Some makers of reusable containers, such as CamelBak Products LLC, were turning away from polycarbonate because they were hearing murmurs from users who worried about the additive bisphenol A, said Griffin, polymers marketing director for Kingsport, Tenn.-based Eastman.

Those murmurs hit the mainstream media a few months later, and now Tritan is winning business as a PC replacement in baby bottles from Evenflo Co. Inc., as well as other popular brands.

So far, the bulk of the business is attributed to the copolyester's ability to drop almost seamlessly into molds and presses originally designed to use PC, Griffin said.

But now it's also being launched in an all-new product designed to draw consumer attention for the way it looks, rather than the material it uses.

The Kor One water bottle — technically the Kor One Hydration Vessel, according to its creator — was designed specifically to use Tritan in an upscale replacement for both one-time-use PET bottles and the existing style of bottles from companies such as Petaluma, Calif.-based CamelBak, said Kor Ideas Inc. founder Eric Barnes. He discussed the bottle and Eastman on Sept. 11 at the Industrial Designers Society of America annual conference in Phoenix.

"What was on the market was a college-campus, backpacker sort of experience," he said.

Barnes was convinced there was a way to make a reusable water bottle that would also be a status symbol, one that would help wean drinkers of status-symbol water off their disposable bottles and into using the same bottle again and again.

Kor, based in Fountain Valley, Calif., teamed with RKS Design Inc. of Thousand Oaks, Calif., to create the bottle. Barnes said he decided early on to avoid polycarbonate because of BPA.

RKS, which has worked with Eastman resins on projects including guitars made with Eastman's Tenite cellulosic resin, knew about Tritan and connected Barnes' concept with the resin.

The finished product, injection molded by Nypro Inc. of Clinton,

Mass., has a clear bottle with a hinged lid that can be flipped back and opened with one hand. It also can be cleaned in the dishwasher, a major benefit over trying to re-use PET bottles.

The bottle now going on the market costs about \$30 and holds 750

milliliters, or about 22 ounces. Kor expects to introduce both 500-milliliter and 1-liter bottles in the future.

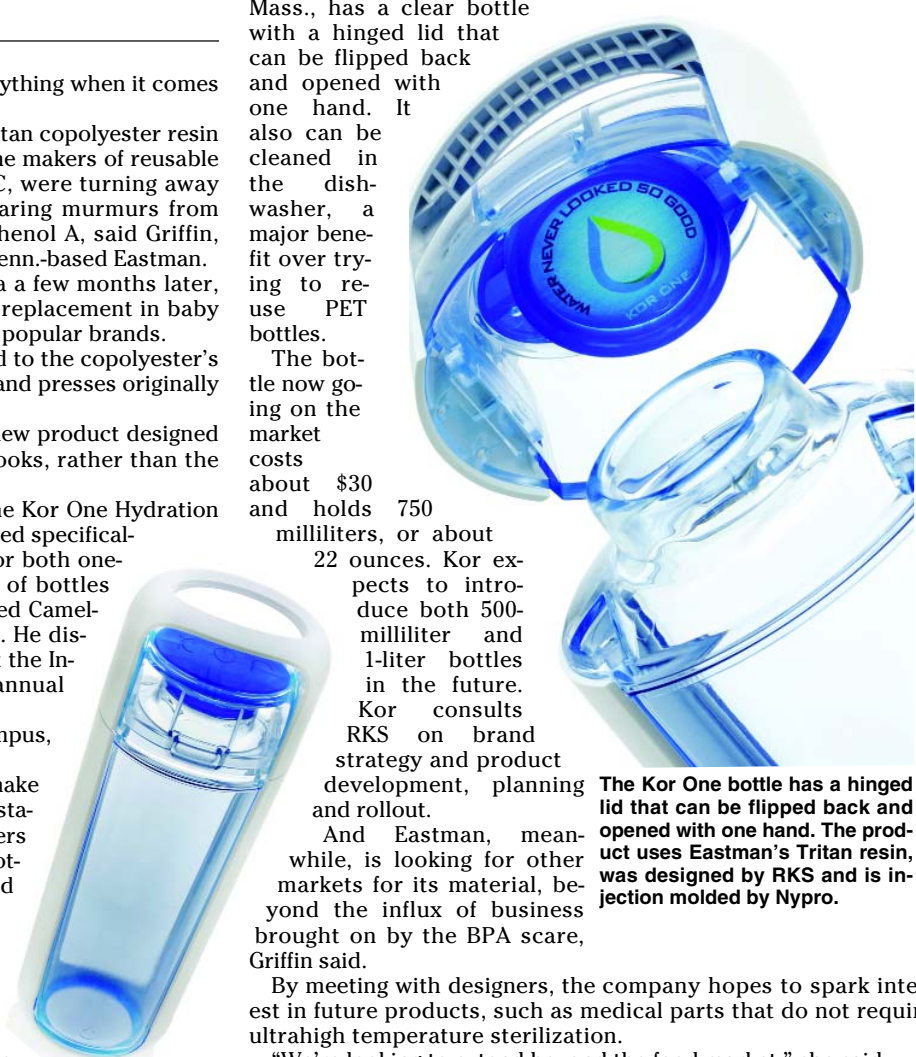
Kor consults RKS on brand strategy and product development, planning and rollout.

And Eastman, meanwhile, is looking for other markets for its material, beyond the influx of business brought on by the BPA scare, Griffin said.

By meeting with designers, the company hopes to spark interest in future products, such as medical parts that do not require ultrahigh temperature sterilization.

"We're looking to extend beyond the food market," she said.

Plastics News correspondent Roger Renstrom contributed to this report.



The Kor One bottle has a hinged lid that can be flipped back and opened with one hand. The product uses Eastman's Tritan resin, was designed by RKS and is injection molded by Nypro.