PRESS RELEASE

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Protolabs supports the frontline battle against COVID-19 with critical parts for testing and ventilator masks

World's fastest digital manufacturers of prototypes and low-volume production parts is using its 3D printing, CNC machining and injection moulding expertise to support the frontline fight against COVID-19.

Protolabs, which employs over 450 people at its European headquarters in Telford, is playing a key role in supporting Italian engineers in the conversion of 'Easybreath' snorkelling equipment into ventilator masks frontline medical staff.

3D printed 'Charlotte' valves are being rapidly produced and shipped direct to its customer Isinnova, who are producing kits that can be used to create a non-invasive ventilator masks that will help save lives.

The company is also urgently working with a highly multiplexed molecular diagnostics specialist to produce a series of plastic cassettes that will help house a critical medical solution used in testing for COVID-19.

AusDiagnostics approached Protolabs to see if it could injection mould 500 sample parts, a challenge that was immediately picked up by the Shropshire-based on-demand manufacturer.

The first CAD drawings were not fit for manufacture so were quickly updated and the right material specified, with production now underway with parts set to be shipped by April 9th.

“We’re currently working on a number of customer projects that are critical to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic,” explained Bjoern Klaas, Vice President and Managing Director of Protolabs Europe.

“With the ‘Charlotte valve’ in Italy it is already having a really positive impact on the challenge faced by medical staff and the wider society, whilst our latest involvement with AusDiagnostics is crucial in the UK’s ramp up of testing for the virus.

He continued: “The tests will be used by over 20 large NHS trust hospitals in the UK, as well as medical diagnostics centres across Europe. The customer makes almost 200 kits a day, but this figure will increase rapidly to meet the demand for more testing, with our injection moulding line ready to manufacture 20,000 cassettes every quarter.

“Digital manufacturing can provide incredible speed of development and continues to be essential in equipping our frontline staff with the solutions they need.”

Protolabs provide critical prototyping and manufacturing services to medical supply chains, telecommunications providers, energy companies, water treatment services and other sectors vital to keep society moving.

The company will continue to remain operational across its UK and German manufacturing facilities, ensuring that staff adhere to work from home policies where possible, and hygiene and social distancing measures.

Bjoern concluded: “Protolabs employees play a vital role in helping us support the needs of our customers in what is a generation-defining moment. I am extremely proud of the commitment and expertise everyone is showing and I am humbled that, in our own way, we can contribute to saving lives across the world.”

For further information, please visit www.protolabs.co.uk.

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ABOUT PROTOLABS

Protolabs is the world's fastest digital manufacturing source for custom prototypes and low-volume production parts. The technology-enabled company uses advanced 3D printing, CNC machining and injection moulding technologies to produce parts within days. The result is an unprecedented speed-to-market value for product designers and engineers worldwide.

Aspects:

- An automated quoting system and proprietary software translate digital 3D CAD models into instructions for high-speed manufacturing equipment. The result is parts that are shipped in 1 to 15 days.
- The company is anchored by three flagship services: 3D printing (additive manufacturing), CNC machining and injection moulding.
- Additive manufacturing employs advanced 3D printing technologies that can create extremely accurate prototypes with complex geometries. Additive parts are built by stereolithography, selective laser sintering, Multi Jet Fusion, PolyJet and direct metal laser sintering processes, and in a range a plastics and metals.
- Protolabs uses three and five-axis milling and turning to machine engineering-grade plastic and metal prototypes and functional end-use parts in quantities of less than 200.
- Injection moulding is used for quick-turn prototyping, bridge tooling and low-volume production of up to 10,000+ parts. More than 100 thermoplastics, and thermoset polymers (including liquid silicone rubber) are offered.

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