

FEATURES

MPLUS COSMETICS: UNLOCKING THE PERFECT SYNERGY BETWEEN FORMULA AND PACKAGING

BEAUTYMATTER STUDIO

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MPlus Cosmetics



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Do one thing and do it better than anyone else, and the rest will follow. David Chant founded Mascara Plus in 2002, grounded in mascara formulation expertise combined with in-house production of fiber brushes, which provided a foundation for rapid growth.

While mascara remains a cornerstone of the business, its offering has evolved and diversified to include a comprehensive range, including face, eye, and lip categories. The company's ability to find the perfect synergy between formula and packaging enables speed to market, providing its clients with a significant competitive edge.

Its state-of-the-art facilities in Milan, Italy, house highly experienced and skilled cosmetic scientists who ensure processing techniques are second to none. Research and development play a significant role in providing makeup production that is innovative and produces on-trend outcomes. The in-house team works tirelessly to achieve each client's specific goal.

With a global clientele, MPlus Cosmetics remains committed to delivering innovative solutions for color cosmetics. BeautyMatter sat down with founder David Chant to learn more.

Please share a bit about your back story and the impetus for starting the business.

It's an interesting story! I finished university with a degree in physics, and at that time there were not many opportunities with that degree. My parents were high school teachers, and they pushed me to do the same. Fortunately, no one hired me as a high school physics teacher, so I took a job at Estée Lauder as a technician in their laboratories. I found the work very interesting. After being in the industry for 10 years, I saw a rare opportunity in the fact that the manufacturers out there did not have a great know-how of mascara and I did; therefore there was a huge opportunity to start a company that focused on mascara. I had very little cash, so I hacked out a deal with someone who had a shampoo factory in order to use his laboratories and go to trade shows with him while agreeing to produce at his facility. There it was—Mascara Plus was born!

When you founded the business, why did you focus only on mascara?

I had previously spent many years in the L'Oréal mascara laboratories, and it was a natural decision since we were way ahead of everyone else in terms of the formulation technology.

The other manufacturers in the sector did not have a great know-how, and in those years, the mascara market was expanding. Therefore, there was a huge opportunity to start a company that focused on mascara. Passion for the product and intuition guided me to found my own company. Considering that we had in house the know-how and expertise to introduce an excellent product, our goal was to become the best quality mascara manufacturer.

Within cosmetics, mascara has always played an important role, being among the best-selling products. In 2002, when MPlus was founded, the global eye makeup market, which includes mascaras, was estimated at 2 to 4 billion dollars. The mascara industry was growing at a rate of about 5% to 7% per year, thanks to product innovation and expansion into emerging markets—an insight that proved to be successful since even today the global mascara market is constantly evolving. In 2023, its market size was valued at \$8.39 billion, projected to grow to \$13.98 billion by 2030, representing a CAGR of 7.29% from 2024 to 2030.

MPlus manufactures not only formulations but also brushes and applicators. How did this evolve?

Well, in order to create a great mascara application, of course you need a great brush. I wasn't satisfied with the brushes our suppliers were providing for us at the time. We knew precisely how to create better brushes to give more volume to lashes, so we did it. We have developed an in-house production facility dedicated to crafting high-quality brushes, which include single and double brushes, shaped brushes, and hybrid brushes.

In addition to mascara brush production, we also develop a wide range of different brow brushes and face and lip applicators. In our portfolio, we can count more than 200 types of brushes and applicators, and customers can customize the applicator to enrich the best performance and to have in this way a unique product.

Many manufacturers focus only on the formula and filling. Even as MPlus expands its offering, the packaging remains important to the product you deliver to your clients. What does the synergy between the package and formula mean in your process?

What it means is sometimes we start projects from the point of view of formulation, and sometimes we start with the applicator. Innovation can come from both of these aspects, so we want to be on the forefront, covering all grounds.

With our in-house brush production, we can guarantee a perfect synergy between the formula and the package. This allows us to maintain a direct workflow, reduce delivery times without involving external suppliers, and decrease production times.

"Although the cosmetics industry accounts for only about 2% of the total microplastic release, it is one of the sectors most significantly impacted by the new restrictions."

BY DAVID CHANT, FOUNDER, MPLUS COSMETICS

MPlus is known for its ability to transform ideas into pioneering products and anticipating and generating new trends. Can you share a little about your Innovation Hub and its role in bringing clients' ideas to life?

While we certainly look at the common trend forecasting sources the industry watches, we go a step further. High-level trend concepts are great to get the creative juices flowing, but they need to be commercialized to be useful. We regularly conduct our own market research to identify trends and customer needs that are shared with the 25 people who currently work between R&D and the applicator innovation department.

We create roughly 50 new formulations. Also, we have quite a lean system that promotes very good execution of the ideas from the clients directly to the bench technician. So, I feel we have great innovation and we're always excited to share it with our customers. Our lab produces roughly 100 batches per week each.

Why is the connection between formula and product so important in this category?

This connection is so important because they both need to be very excellent and optimized to have a perfect product tailored to our customers' needs. We perform tests between the formula and the brush until perfect compatibility is achieved.

The color cosmetic category is competitive and success demands consideration of the full package—formula, component, application. These elements create the experience, but when well executed they can also enhance the performance of the formula.

What trends or technology are you currently watching as it relates to formulas and products in the color cosmetic category?

We are seeing lots of sticks, which are easy to use, hybrid, multipurpose, and transforming products by adding actives to color cosmetics. There will be a lot of work that needs to be done to remove all the microplastics from the color cosmetics in the next few years. This will take a large amount of work from R&D and regulatory entities.

The use of microplastics has been a growing concern, leading to the implementation of new regulations aimed at reducing their environmental impact. Although the cosmetics industry accounts for only about 2% of the total microplastic release, it is one of the sectors most significantly impacted by the new restrictions. Regulation (EU) 2023/2055, which came into effect on October 17, 2023, introduces several restrictions with a phased approach on the use of microplastics across various product categories, including cosmetics. From October 17, 2031, makeup, lip, and nail products containing synthetic polymer microparticles (SPM) must be labeled "contains microplastics", and their sale will be prohibited starting October 17, 2035.

While the regulation aims to reduce the use of microplastics, its implementation presents some challenges. Suppliers of raw materials are working to adjust to the new requirements, and companies are navigating the process of compliance amid evolving guidelines. The major challenge is maintaining the performance of certain products. The unique properties of microplastics can be difficult to replicate with alternative ingredients, and despite the industry's best efforts to develop new formulations, it is not always possible to achieve the same level of effectiveness. The industry is actively seeking sustainable alternatives to microplastics and remains committed to meeting consumer needs and regulatory standards.

The Middle East has become an increasingly important market. Are you seeing an increase in products formulated specifically for the region?

Recently, we are no longer seeing a clear differentiation between the various markets. While cultural specificities remain, the type of product required and the shades are becoming standardized.

In 2019, you adopted the Japanese philosophy of lean manufacturing. What was the impetus for this shift?

In November of 2018, I spent one week touring factories and companies in Japan where I learned a lot about lean manufacturing and processes.

It has been amazing! We call it "the lean journey" and we're still on it. It has really opened our eyes to find waste in our system, and each time we have found waste in the system, we have shifted those resources to better serve our customers.

What impact did it have on the company and culture?

We have organized all stages of production, from filling to packaging, in a single line to reduce waste of resources and delivery times.

What's next for MPlus?

We will focus on growth by expanding our in-house filling capacity and increasing R&D to create innovative new formulas widening our product portfolio on eyes, face, and lip. We are also committed to sustainability and will invest in the search for sustainable raw materials (removing microplastics), reducing the waste related to the water used in production, and introducing products with lower environmental impacts.