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Careers in packaging

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Proof of potential – production manager Matthew Durka's career in packaging

Production manager at RETAL PA Matthew Durka is something of a celebrity across the global RETAL community – and in his native Donora, PA. After being featured in the factory's 'Virtual Tour' (available to watch here on the company's YouTube), Matthew's friendly and informative approach is a great representation of the atmosphere – and opportunities - available.

40-year-old Matthew has been with RETAL PA since it started production in 2016, with the factory's HR manager Elizabeth Giecek joking that 'Matt came with the building' because he had worked at the previous production factory on the site for 15 years. Matt's capabilities, positive attitude and 'ability to get the job done' have been consistently rewarded with promotions over the past five years, with his current position as production manager including training new recruits to his team, which is currently expanding.

Matthew says, "I was one of the first half dozen employees here and I'm so happy to see us bringing lots more employment opportunities to my hometown. When I started, the factory was just a shell and I've loved being involved with every aspect – I know this place from the ground up. I know we offer interesting career opportunities for local people because that's what's happened to me."



Honesty and communication

Matthew started his manufacturing career in 2000 and, while he enjoyed the work, he did not appreciate the challenging atmosphere. He explains, "In my first job, the company style was to withhold information and keep people feeling nervous. I never liked it, and I promised myself I'd only work for companies that valued honesty and good communication. It's one of the reasons I love working here at RETAL PA; the team all talk about what we're doing and how we're doing it, everyone has a chance to say what they think. We're all here to do our job well and to provide for our families. We all learn from each other and we're all accountable; we seem to get the best out of people, and that shows in the bottom line too."

Matt's knowledge of PET packaging production is second to none. This experience has been quickly rewarded at RETAL PA, with his management role now seeing him as head of production. He says, "I have a very open approach with my team, and I value their feedback; everyone has a voice and people want and deserve to be heard. There's been three of us here since the start – me, Joe Pakish our production supervisor and Rob Evans our maintenance supervisor – and we all need each other to be successful. Now that I'm in a management role, I need Joe and Rob on the floor leading our teams so I can do meetings and continue to help build our successful culture. Our CEO Darius Janulionis is amazing too, so encouraging, and Liz our HR manager supports us all. It's a growing but consistent team, and there's room for more!"

More to learn

Having spent his whole professional life working in plastic packaging production, Matthew still believes he has more to learn and more opportunities to grasp and is particularly encouraged by the training and development available with RETAL as a global company. He adds, "I had a whirlwind of training when I first started with RETAL and it was great to see more about how the company does what they do; it really boosted my plastics knowledge and gave me a great insight into my potential future with the company. I love sharing that knowledge with new people joining us; it's a real career move coming to RETAL."

RETAL PA is looking to add at least 30 permanent new recruits across production, maintenance and the laboratory thanks to a recent investment and considerable expansion, taking its one billion preform a year production right up to two billion from January 2022 onwards