

# TAKING THE NANOPULSE

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## **Nanotechnology: a not-ready-for-primetime player?**

**Think again. There's nanotechnology ready  
for this economy, your product, right now.**

BY SCOTT E. RICKERT

A pinch of nanoparticles. A dash of polymers. Stir it up and you've got nanotechnology. Right? Wrong! At a recent industry conference I attended, colleagues were bemoaning the fact that nanotechnology is getting tagged as "not ready for prime time." It doesn't work, it doesn't process correctly, it's not scaleable.

Let's shift the focus. If nanotechnology isn't working for you, it's not a technology problem. It's a technologist problem.

Didn't we learn this from the polymer industry 30 years ago? There are instant mashed potatoes. Instant pudding. Instant cocoa. But there's no such thing as instant nanotechnology. You don't just dump a dash of nanoparticles in your recipe and make magic. Yes, a new addition to the formula will change melting points or tensile strength, shorten curing time or lengthen mixing time. So are you thinking about giving up? Or focused on getting ahead?

If you want nanotechnology that works, you start with nanotechnology experts. That may be a nanomaterials supplier, but not likely. (No offense, guys.) The industry is still pretty young for that. It's better to look upstream to a manufacturer or developer. It's a new world, and these are the people who are developing materials. Whether you need a wholesale change or just a tweak, they can guide you through formulation, functionalization of nanoparticles, application methods and all the rest. I promise you that there is technology right now for you that's commercial ready – or close to it. You just need to find the right people. Need help with that? I'm a big fan of the NanoBusiness Alliance ([www.nanobusiness.org](http://www.nanobusiness.org)). The first trade organization in the nanospace, they've recently refocused their efforts to include helping develop partnerships. No one knows the industry and its players better.

Another avenue to your commercial nano-solutions? Whatever your industry, there's most certainly an industry conference. And I'll bet my conference VIP pass that there will be speakers there talking about nanotechnology that's already changing your business. My own company is getting called on for presenters to the plastics, automotive, solar energy and other fields. And we're not alone. Talk to the experts with experience in *your* field – they may have a lot more ideas in their hip pocket. And they certainly have a lot of real-world knowledge and a fat rolodex they'd be happy to share..

What's that I hear? Groaning and mumbling from the back row? It's a

lousy economy, you say? Consumers don't want to pay more? Companies can stay afloat only by cutting prices and costs?

I suggest you rethink the price-value equation, Dr. No. What if a nano-enhanced skincare lotion replaced two other products? What if plastic car components lasted longer because nano-reinforced coatings prevented scratching? What if ceramic nanocomposites reduced airfares because airplane engines were more resistant to heat damage and oxidation? These aren't pie-in-the-sky science fiction. You can talk to people today about how to get it done.

Ready to reinvent your product line for the new economy? Nanotechnology isn't a plug-and-play solution yet, but it *is* up to the challenge. Aren't you?

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