

WHEN WILL GOOGLE'S STOCK STOP RISING? P. 08

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BEYOND OIL

COVER STORY


Reinventing Energy

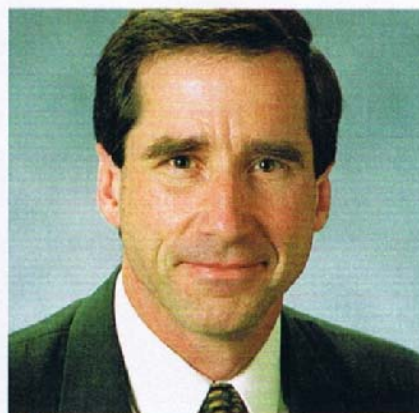
The World Economic Forum's Tech Pioneers offer innovative approaches to energy problems.

Michael Biddle has always believed the future is in plastics. After convincing his former employer, Dow Chemical, to enter the plastics recycling business, Mr. Biddle decided to strike out on his own by creating MBA Polymers, which he hopes will someday be as big as Dow. MBA Polymers takes broken CD players, desktop printers, and laptop computers that have been shredded into small pieces, separates the different plastics and purifies them, and then sells them back to consumer electronics companies.

"Rather than a recycler, we consider ourselves a plastics company that makes plastics in a more cost-effective way," says Mr. Biddle, a self-described lifelong environmentalist. The company just celebrated the grand opening of its first plant in China, a joint venture with Guangzhou Iron & Steel, in November. China is the world's fastest-growing plastics consumer and has to import 50 percent of what it

uses. Because making plastics is an energy-intensive business, and China is trying to reduce its dependence on oil, MBA Polymers is betting its process—which consumes only 5 percent of the energy normally used to make the same amount of virgin plastic—will look increasingly attractive to the Chinese. The process also addresses another issue in China, which suffers from an acute water shortage: It uses only 1 percent of the water consumed in conventional plastics manufacture.

MBA Polymers plans to open a plant in Austria, a joint venture with local recycler Mueller-Guttenbrunn, in January. So what's next for the company, which was listed in *Red Herring* in 2005 as one of 10 private cleantech companies to watch? More plants outside the United States, says Mr. Biddle. Because Europe is ahead of the rest of the world in recycling consumer electronic products, he and his family have moved to Germany "to get closer to the center of the universe." 



Michael Biddle

AGE 50

TITLE Chairman and CEO, MBA Polymers

LOCATION Richmond, California

FOUNDED 1994

FUNDING \$30 million, 4 rounds

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