



Star 1 Products

Mission: Make Rollformers' Lives Easier

■ By Linda Schmid

In their early days, both Robert and Nelson Miller grew up in McBain, Michigan, working in their dad's welding shop; both have long histories in the industry.

Robert worked in a roll-forming shop for Ray Wagler. Customers told Wagler that one of their pain points was difficulty in applying felt to metal as a condensation solution. One of the main problems was inconsistent felt backing tension, which could result in the backing entering the machine and gumming up the rollers and dies. There were also problems with aligning the felt and splicing felt rolls together. Robert and Ray began mulling over this problem and eventually developed a felt applicator that was easier to use, more efficient, and more consistent than the applicator the customer had been using, and it also featured backup sensors.

Wagler kept hearing from more contacts that they wanted the new felt applicator, and he suggested that Robert take it



Star 1 Coil Management System. ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF STAR 1 PRODUCTS.

and run with it. In turn, Robert saw an opportunity before him to start a business of his own, which was something he hadn't specifically gone looking for, but he could see the potential the new felt applicator

represented. He began operating his new venture out of his father's welding shop.

Robert and his brother Nelson were both in the industry at the time, working under different business names. Nelson

Business Profile



A felt applicator packed up and ready to ship.

mainly handled painting and sandblasting, while Robert headed up a manufacturing and welding business. Their services were complementary, but they weren't functioning as one company.



Developing Through Innovation

Product expansion has been the natural result of listening to customer challenges; customers' work frustrations became the inspiration for new product innovation.

Customers were experiencing difficulty moving long panels around, so Star 1 developed an Adjustable Wide Fork for a forklift that can handle long lengths of metal, 30 to 40 feet long, without harming, bending, or crinkling them. In this way, the operator doesn't have to get off the forklift to place straps with spreader bars to hold the metal. Instead, the forklift picks up the wide fork and puts it in place, making the process much more efficient. Further, if the wide fork doesn't fit through a door, the fork can be adjusted so that it goes sideways.


The company's Coil Handling System is tailored for limited space and low ceilings; a smaller footprint for coil storage is very helpful for many shops. Further, the riding platform gives the operator better visibility, maneuverability, and greater safety during coil transport. The upgraded heavy-duty I-beam frame that handles 5-ton coils is also much safer than lifting that weight with a forklift. It provides greater efficiency in workflow




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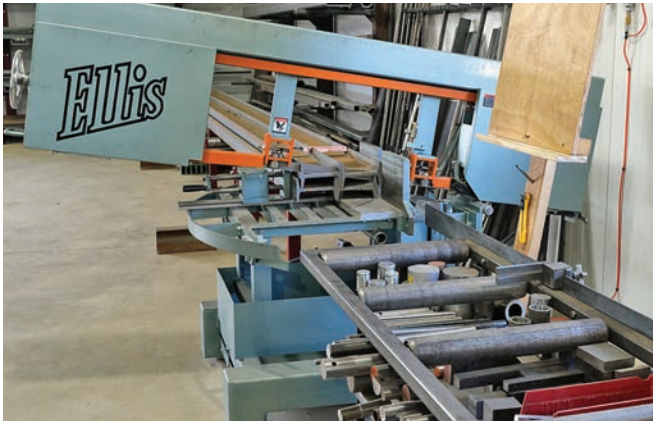




RB

Gold Key of Excellence Award Winner

Business Profile



(ABOVE) Workshop Saw (RIGHT) Star 1 Folder in progress.

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF STAR 1 PRODUCTS.

with a handler that moves coils to the decoiler, allowing the operator to quickly secure them. It works with easy-to-maintain hydraulics rather than complex electronics. The system accommodates a wide variety of coil finishes, such as textured, printed, and camouflaged.

Another innovative product that the company developed is their Trim Folder. This product has greatly improved the efficiency in small roll-forming shops through multi-profile capacity that requires operators to perform only minimal reconfiguration. This machine is also programmable so that once the bend sequences are installed, they can be recalled, thereby reducing human error and saving time. This machine also handles longer trim pieces while maintaining accuracy.



Star 1 Manual Milling Machine

Customers and Marketing

The customer base is mainly from the Plain Community—roll-forming shops that produce steel for pole barns. However, they now service customers across the United States, Canada, and New Zealand. Their niche is providing primarily customers who



A Star 1 employee welding a felt applicator base.

supply materials for agricultural and residential pole barns, large barns, barndominiums, and roofing.

The company has successfully marketed their business through the annual Construction Roll-forming Show and the NFBA's Frame Building Expo. They also advertise in *PCB*, *The Busy Beaver*, and *Rollforming Magazine*.

Convictions Transformed into Practice

The brothers have strong beliefs: they want to faithfully represent their faith in business, as elsewhere. They work at improving their service as well as their products. The goal is to be better today than they were yesterday, so they can make life easier for roll formers.

To this end, the company is reorganizing to provide a better experience for their customers. The partners are committed to working together as a team under the Star 1 name for greater efficiency that will bring more value to their customers.

Words of Wisdom

One piece of business advice that you may not always hear, “Be sure this is what you want to do. Being in business is not for sissies,” Robert said. “It takes a lot of effort and taking responsibility for many things. If you are sure this is what you want, then surround yourself with mentors who have experience in areas you don’t.”

He added, “For example, financing or business ownership, manufacturing, or whatever you need help with.”

The brothers like to create a workplace that is fun to be in. Including employees in brainstorming sessions and listening to what they have to say is important.

Star 1's Future

Moving forward, the company's plan is to continue to polish and perfect what they do. They also see opportunities for expansion in coil handling—both in product offerings and in sales. They are planning to take their coil handling capabilities to market in a bigger way. **PB**