

The History of Star Packaging
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Star Packaging and Distribution, Inc.

I had worked the last 20+ years for a large company, who had decided to down-size, and I felt the time had come to change my future income and career goals. I had established many contacts with some of our industrial customers over the years, who encouraged me to possibly start my own business, because of my experience in the packaging industry. I must admit, it started with just a dream and a prayer!

After much prayer, and moral support from my wife Pam, I felt God was directing me to start my own business. The draw-back to this was devoting all my time to establishing this business. So, I was literally unemployed, with no income, and a wife and three daughters depending on me! We lived in Mason at the time and I can remember that Friday night that Pam and I talked and worried about paying our bills until some income would be produced by this "new business". Once I knew we agreed on this, and I had her support, I was off and running! We've been through a lot of changes in our 39 years of marriage, but this was the biggest "leap of faith" I had ask her to take!

The next day, Saturday morning, I went to one of the local office supply stores and bought a desk, chair, phone, and fax machine. I spent that weekend setting it all up in our basement. I remember that Sunday morning as I prayed for God to guide our new business endeavor, I opened my Bible to Proverbs 16:8. It says, "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right." I knew God was telling me honest business practices are more important than any amount of income! That verse became our company motto from the first day of business and is printed on most all our company documents. Come Monday morning, February 8, 1999, Star Packaging was officially in business! The phone calls started early that Monday morning. I started by selling new and used wooden pallets. By Tuesday morning, I had secured my first sales order! It was for 350 new pallets, and I must say I was surprised this company manager was taking a chance with a brand new company to supply his product that was so valuable to his production line! Even though it was exciting, the pressure was now on to make this new venture work. I was acquainted with a gentleman that operated a lumber and pallet assembly company. I had already met with him, prior to my first sale, and he agreed to take a chance on me and my dream by giving me 30 days credit on my first order. Naturally, I was pleased to place my first order and required delivery date. He assured me that delivery would be on time, and he never let me down! I watched my first load arrive at my customer's plant, and as simple as that sounds, it was a **huge** step for Star Packaging! Knowing I was trying to get the company started, my customer expedited my invoice through the system and I received my first check within 2 weeks after I started. I drove straight to my supplier and paid my bill with him. Both of those gentlemen are now very good friends of mine, and we're still doing business together! I had made my first commission and it was more than I had hoped it would be. I was pleased, but I know Pam was more excited just to see some long awaited income. I had not made a loan or borrowed from anyone to start this business, so the "start-up" money was from our own budget. It felt good to be seeing a dream come true. As the Bible says, "with God all things are possible," and certainly He had blessed our efforts and trust in Him.

The sales continued along with several new customers. Soon our income had surpassed my previous employment, and being confident in our personal expenses being paid, I was ready to expand the business. One of my customers said, if I had a small building, he could give me some additional business. I could warehouse his products, pull orders, and crate them up for shipment. I found a warehouse complex with small bays for rent by the month. I rented one bay and signed a one year lease. It was less than 500 sq. ft. but it was a big step for me to make that commitment. I

purchased a small used forklift and brought some of my hand tools from home. I told my customer I was ready to give it a try and soon the semi-truck loads of material was rolling in!

In June of that year, our twin daughters Jessica and Jackie had graduated high school. They had worked part-time for some local retailers, but shocked me one day by saying they wanted to work for me! I actually tried to discourage them. I told them my building had no heat or air conditioning, no running water, or bathroom! They were still persistent, so I said they could try it for a while. Like most teenagers, I was sure they just wanted a little spending money, and this idea of theirs would be short lived, especially when they experienced the hard physical work and the environment they would be in. I mean, come on, these were "daddy's little girls," I couldn't see them breaking a nail, let alone driving nails! Our oldest daughter, Lisa was already working as a Medical Assistant, and was doing very well. So, I thought I would at least show Jessica and Jackie that packaging and crating was not the type of career for them. Well, they proved me wrong! After almost 12 years, they are not only still at Star Packaging, but Jessica is our Office Manager and Jackie is our Account Manager. They literally started on the "ground floor" of the business and worked their way to the top! They are truly indispensable to our company! I started them out with some light packaging jobs, but it wasn't long until they wanted their own hammers and to learn how to use my hand saw. That's right, hand tools! The only power tool we had was an old circular saw, and that was just for cutting plywood. I bought them some insulated coveralls and we bought a kerosene heater so we wouldn't keep going to the car to get warm, in the winter. Our bathroom breaks consisted of locking up and driving to the local UDF store. It was tough, but with hard work, and God's help, we were growing.

My friend with the lumber company is a good Christian man, and he saw the needs the girls and I had, so he gave us a couple of old nail guns and an air hose. I went out and bought us a small air compressor and a power miter saw. Wow, we thought we had really moved up in the world! Most days we would arrive at the shop early, do our packaging and crating, unload and load our trucks, and go home for lunch. Then it was go to the basement for what you would call "the office work". I didn't have a computer, let alone the internet, so everything was done by hand. I taught the girls how to invoice, write our checks, figure our profit, and basically all the paperwork that goes along with owning your own business.

We always looked forward to our family dinners in the evening. We would tell Pam and Lisa about our adventures that day! Of course, we wanted to know about their day as well. Lisa stayed with her Medical career and Pam had stayed with her job in Electronic Assembly, but they both have always been so supportive of Star Packaging. As a matter of fact, we had to work some late nights at the shop to meet some deadlines and we could always count on all the family to help us. Pam, Lisa and her husband Keith, and Jessica's husband Ryan would all pitch in to help us out! Of course, Jackie has since married, and her husband Ryan has been supportive as well. Since Star Packaging began, we have seen our 3 daughters marry, gained 3 wonderful son-in-laws, and saw 4 beautiful grandchildren added to our family.

Our customers were pleased with our hard work, but they were encouraging me to become more "up to date" in our office and communication abilities. The basics of a phone and fax machine were no longer sufficient if we wanted the business to grow. It was time to get a cell phone and buy a computer! Not long after that, my late sister Eve, came over for several evenings and gave me a crash course on using the computer to enhance our business. Through her patience and 30 years of experience as an Administrative Assistant, she took on the task of teaching me to navigate my way through computer programs. She was such a perfectionist with her skills and I had hoped to offer her a job some day at Star Packaging, but it was not meant to be.

Whether it was learning new technology for the office, designing a new crate for a customer, or planning financially, there were some long nights spent in that basement office. I'm sure glad God

works midnights too! Although we had some great opportunities coming our way, I was still trying to control our growth. We actually turned down some work, at times, because we just didn't have the space or the labor force to meet the demands. I certainly didn't want to commit something to my customers and not meet their requirements. Our company had been profitable, and I'm sure I could have secured a loan for a larger building, more equipment, and more employees, but that was not the financial burden I wanted on me, or our "young company". Growth for a company is exiting, but I didn't want to get "too big too fast"! Honesty, integrity, quality, and service continued to be our priorities, with or without growth. Remember Proverbs 16:8?

With the girls' help and more opportunities, we now were renting two bays, and finally grew to five! Finally running out of space, and feeling financially able, we moved to a new building with 5,000 sq. ft. Within 6 months we expanded to 10,000! We stayed there for 2 years. After continued growth, in 2003 we bought 2 acres from the City of Lebanon, and with the help of the bank, built our own 12,000 sq. ft. building! It was the first loan I had made since starting the business. It was a difficult decision but I feel like it was the right thing to do, financially. A building that size is considered small to many, but to me it was a huge success from starting in the corner of our basement! From the beginning, I told God I didn't want to be the "biggest guy on the block", but I just wanted a comfortable living for my family and be able to pay my bills. He has more than answered my prayers!

Shortly after we moved into our new building, and current location, I hired our first employee. That was another big step to us. It had always just been me and the girls, and certainly that had its advantages, but it also had disadvantages. If I or one of the girls were sick, it certainly affected our production, and it limited me on the time needed for sales work or customer visits. We now have 3 additional employees. Josh has been with us for 4 years, Tommy for 3 years, and Russ for 2 years. I value each one and the contribution and commitment they have made to Star Packaging. Russ is actually my brother, and after 45 years and retiring from International Paper Co., he brings a lot of experience in logistics to Star Packaging!

Even though all of our employees are not actually family members, we've tried to make them feel like they are. We've had some other employees with us for a short time but have since moved on to other opportunities. Most of them stay in touch with us and come back to visit when they can. All of them were what I would consider young people, and I tried to make their experience at Star Packaging a memorable one. Along with good work ethics, I also try to teach them the values of good morals, family values, and a Christian way of life. I realize there is a fine line for this in the workplace, but I've never forced my values or opinions on any of them. As a matter of fact, they have all seemed to appreciate the help I've tried to give them in dealing with the issues of life. We even have a voluntary Bible study twice a week, before work, and they all choose to attend. Many times they choose the "topic for discussion" and it's usually about current events or something they're facing in their young life. They want to know what the Bible says about it! There is joy in providing a job to someone, but an even greater joy if you can help them with answers to life's questions.

I thank God every day for Star Packaging. The work He's provided, the opportunities with customers and vendors, our employees, and the success we've had! There have been some tough times physically, mentally, and financially, but with God's help, we've always paid our bills, never had a lay off, and Star Packaging remains "Open for Business"!

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