

# Young Entrepreneur Finds Success In Turning Around Small Mills

by CHARLENE NELSON

In a business environment where some small domestic hosiery manufacturers have to fight to stay alive and or closing their doors, Meyers Industries and owner James Meyers are definitely going against the tide.



James Meyers, owner of Meyers Industries (left), and his right-hand man, Jim Jennings, Vice-President of Retail for the company.

Within a year, 25-year-old Meyers has purchased two small hosiery companies and literally turned them around. His business is growing so that he recently had to rent another facility to house additional knitting operations as well as distribution and warehousing.

Meyers Industries recently purchased Madaris Hosiery Mill in Hickory from longtime owner Bill Huffman, and in February of last year, it purchased YE&S Hosiery Finishing, Inc. in Catawba from owners Richards Edwards, Carl Sigmon and David Yount.

Since acquiring Madaris, the young man who worked for hosiery mills from the time he was old enough to work and grew up with a mother and grandmother who worked as hosiery seamers, has increased production at the plant to where he has had to hire an additional 23 employees. The number of employees increased from seven to 30 within a month.

Meyers also purchased the machinery of S& D Hosiery in Locust, NC.

When Meyers purchased it, Madaris was a greige mill, but since taking it over, he has converted it to a vertical operation. He also converted the Catawba YE&S to a vertical operation by installing 40 knitting machines. . . Employment there has gone from 15 employees to more than 40.

The purchase of Madaris increased Meyers' business by 33 percent, he says.

"When we came in, we brought in a new customer base and increased production and thereby changed the entire situation."

The company's most recent step was to rent the building on Highland Avenue in Hickory, which housed International Hosiery. In that building, Meyers is setting up a knitting, distribution and warehouse facility.

In all, the company, which began in Meyers home about three years ago with Meyers as its sole employee, has grown to an operation with three plants, and 90 employees in a very short period of time. By the end of the summer, Meyers expects to have a total of 100 employees in the three locations.

The company has the capability to make basic athletic socks, hiking socks, heavy and light gauge boot socks, diabetic socks and children's athletic socks.

Although the three plants are staying busy making socks, Meyers says that only about 50 percent of the company's business is in production. The other half is something the young entrepreneur has been doing since he was about 21 years old: sales.

Meyers sells socks he purchases from greige mills and finishes as well as closeouts he purchases.

"We sell any type of socks. We buy closeouts and resell them after we bring them in and finish them or do whatever is necessary to make the product worthwhile," says Meyers.

Meyers began selling socks while he was working for other hosiery mills in the area: He worked for Madaris, Valley-Tex and Moretz, learning all aspects of manufacturing before going into business for himself three years ago.

"I sewed socks for Bill Huffman at Madaris and I would find people who wanted to buy socks and I would purchase the socks, have them finished and band them at my house. That is how I started my customer base," explains Meyers.

Meyers' right-hand man and Vice-President of Retail for the company Jim Jennings attributes much of the company's success to Meyers' innate ability to sell.

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<b>Cottons:</b>	KP, CP, Pima's, and blends (OE and Ringspun)
<b>Cotton/Acrylic (In Stock):</b>	Ferre Ingrain colors and bleached
<b>Nylon &amp; Polypropylene:</b>	Natural and ingrain colors, Aircovered yarns
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# The New Kid on the Block Ups The Goal Line

Meyers Industries is a name that has just appeared on the scene.  
But already it is the topic of conversation in hosiery circles.

Two longtime hosiery operations are under the Meyers Industries umbrella. Madaris Hosiery Mill Inc. of Hickory and Y.E.&S. Hosiery Finishing Inc. in Catawba are our core. Our personnel and sales have increased, along with our production capacity and our new distribution facility also in Hickory. We believe hosiery manufacturing has a promising future. Contact us for your greige or finishing needs.

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PO Box 366  
Catawba, NC 28609  
(828) 241-2706

**Meyers Industries Hickory**  
1451 14th Ave NE  
PO Box 326  
Hickory, NC 28601  
(828) 322-6841

"I think one of James' gifts is his ability to sell product to people," says Jennings.

Jennings was Meyers' first employee. The two began working together when the business was still in Meyers's home. Shortly after graduating from ASU, Jennings who had a background in the furniture industry, met Meyers, became friends and started working with him. He has been instrumental in making all the changes happen, Meyers says.

Meyers also has a silent partner and backer in the business, Hugh E. Wallace, to whom he attributes much of the company's success.

When questioned about why they would take the risk of buying small hosiery companies in an environment which is not friendly to the small domestic manufacturer, Meyers and Jennings say they aren't closing their eyes to the economic situation, they just believe they can make it happen for Meyers Industries.

"I see good and I see bad," says Meyers. "I see things that can be taken from nothing and made into something good. Just because everyone else is doing bad does not mean that we have to. We want to be supportive of anyone in the hosiery industry so we can help the industry to be successful."

Asked what makes them different, Meyers says its "attitude and thought processes."

"I'm not looking to become wealthy off small dozens but I'm looking to develop something that is of benefit to me, my family and my employees over the long run."

Meyers' mother works as seaming manager at the Madaris plant.

The business owner attributes his success to One much higher than himself:

"One man can do nothing, but God can do anything, and that is the key to our success."

Jennings sees good things ahead for the company.

"I think the smaller businesses have just aged," says Jennings. "Their owners are ready to retire and they have fought their fight. The larger companies are looking at the bottom line," says Jennings.

"James saw an opportunity. And, we are ready to fight to make something good happen."

As for the future, both Meyers and Jennings say it is time to adjust to the rapid changes the company has made.

"We have made so many changes in the past two months that we are going to let the dust settle a little and concentrate on building our customer base, our sales and our quality," explains Meyers.

"We want to build an organization now with the abilities we have, and as new opportunities arise, we will be able to explore those opportunities."