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Business mags praise Lake Zurich-based internet retailer

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LAKE ZURICH — With recent honors from two business magazines as proof, the father and son duo of Pat and Ron Starr have lived up to their last name for the past 27 years with their family-owned Lake Zurich business Koffler Sales.

Ron, Koffler Sales' president, and Pat, the CEO, were told in August that they made Internet Retailer Magazine's Second500 Guide, which is a sister publication to its widely distributed Top 500 Guide, also referred to as the "Bible of the E-Commerce Industry."

Similar to how the Top 500 Guide ranks e-retailers based on annual online revenues, the magazine's Second 500 Guide promotes the up-and-coming businesses that are unique to their individual markets. Retailers on the second list are ranked from 501 to 1,000.

Koffler, located at 785 Oakwood Road in Lake Zurich, came in at No. 906 on the list, which factors in the company's \$2.5 million in sales in 2011 and an average of 51,000 site visitors each month earned.

Inc. Magazine also listed Koffler Sales in its Inc5000 list of fastest growing privately held companies. Coming in at No. 1277, Koffler will be honored at The Inc. 500|5000 conference and awards ceremony in October.

The Starrs likened Koffler to "big box" home improvement companies like Home Depot and Lowe's, but explained they are different because Koffler offers protection products that are crafted to meet specific commercial and residential needs.

"Seventy percent is business-to-business sales, and the other 30 percent is business-to-consumer," Ron Starr said. "For instance, consumers might want a product with anti-slip capabilities for their stairs and decks, and a business facility might want a similar anti-slip product for an area that gets a lot of foot traffic."

Koffler Sales isn't limited to anti-slip tape, however. Its products include stair treads, corner guards, floor matting, floor edging, rugged cabinets, door protection and diamond plate wall panels for garages and work spaces.

In addition to exceeding industry standards with their products, Pat and Ron pride themselves on the personal customer service Koffler offers, which they said is atypical from many internet retailers. Ron said that the phone is always answered by the third ring during normal business hours.

Although the Starrs have owned the company for nearly 30 years now, Koffler Sales has been a family-run business specializing in floor and wall protection for twice that time. Koffler Sales Company was originally founded in 1949 by Sam Koffler, who successfully ran it as a catalogue business until the

Starrs bought it from him when he retired in 1985.

“We continued to operate it as a catalogue company before the internet was even a thought,” Ron Starr said, adding that he and his father sent out 32-page catalogues to interested individuals and corporations prior to the transition to e-retail.

Koffler was solely operated as a catalogue company until the Starrs introduced it to the Internet in 2000. When Ron and Pat determined that paper marketing was no longer a lucrative path in 2007, Koffler Sales entered the e-commerce industry full-time.

Ron Starr has taken to the marketing and advertising side of the business. He said that focus further reinforces Koffler’s foothold as a leader in the niche “floor and wall protection” marketplace. He attributes his knack for creativity to his artistic background, as he had been a full-time artist from about 2001 to 2009 before coming back to work for the family business.

“You’ll see a lot of artwork around our facility now, because once the recession hit I became the largest collector of Ron Starr art in the world,” Ron laughed. “But I enjoy what I do now because I can channel my creativity toward our business, website design and digital marketing.”

For more information about Koffler Sales Company, visit www.kofflersales.com.

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