

# Interview with Todd Miller, President of Isaiah Industries

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Recently, we sat down with [Todd Miller](#), President of [Isaiah Industries/Classic Metal Roofing](#), to discuss the manufacturing side of the Home Improvement industry. Isaiah Industries manufacturers metal roofing products and works with contractors nationwide. They stand as an example of an honest, successful business built on American-made products.

**MB:** Todd, can you tell us a little about your background in the Home Improvement industry, and how you got started with Isaiah Industries?

**TM:** The company was founded by my father in 1980, and I worked here through summers during college. I started working here full-time after college in 1986. The company was a little bit different back in those days; we were doing a lot of commercial metal roofing. We were manufacturing roofing materials for Pizza Hut, Dairy Queen, IHOP, 7-11, and a whole bunch of other national chains. About the time I came into the business full-time in the mid 80's, we saw that that commercial business was not always going to be there. It was very cyclical, prone to architectural fads, and also prone to economic cycles. However, we had a couple of dealers during that time that were selling our products residentially. As a company, we didn't know a whole lot about what those guys were doing. So some of my early tasks were to get out in the field and start working with those dealers that were selling our product residentially, learn what they were doing, learn how they were doing it, and then replicate it with additional dealers across the country.

**MB:** Have you seen any significant changes in your business or the industry in general in the last several years?

**TM:** Changes in the metal roofing industry really have revolved around aesthetics. Metal roofs, either through the forming of the roofing material or the coating of the roofing material, fit very well in a residential setting, as far as design and color. Of course our main focus is products that look like cedar shake or slate tile, or standard shingles, rather than products that look like metal roofs.

In manufacturing, another change we've seen is an increasing trend of people sourcing raw materials from overseas and off-shore manufacturing. Those are things that, as a company, **we will not do**. We are very committed to made-in-America products from made-in-America raw materials, and we are increasingly standing unique in the industry because of that commitment.

**MB:** What were some of the biggest challenges in the last 20-25 years in the industry?

**TM:** The biggest challenge for us is gaining mind-share with the consumer. Asphalt shingles have had such a strong hold in residential roofing for many years, and they'll continue to. But because they do have such a strong hold, a lot of homeowners are not even aware that there are other options out there. The number one thing that has helped us with that has been the Internet, because there are a lot of homeowners thinking, "Wow, I wonder if there are alternatives to conventional roofing?" And thanks to the Internet, they're able to find our products and other similar products as options for them. So our biggest challenge is simply gaining mind-share and getting into that consumer's consideration. As a result of that, we find ourselves in the home improvement industry rather than the roofing industry. If you talk to most manufacturers of traditional roofing materials, they're going to say "Oh, we're in the roofing industry." We don't see ourselves that way because we're not

traditional roofing products. And as a result, we've identified with the Home Improvement industry, which is geared toward homeowners that want to make significant changes to make their home more valuable, more comfortable, more beautiful, and more energy efficient.

**MB:** So what are some qualities that you look for in your dealer base? What do you want to see when someone comes to you and wants to carry Isaiah Industries products?

**TM:** First of all, we're looking for companies that understand the importance of jobs being installed properly. That's probably the number one criterion. You know, the Home Improvement industry has a wide variety of players. Some of them are more concerned with marketing while others are concerned about installing, and we're looking for those that are concerned with doing both to the best of their abilities. So we're always looking for companies that understand the importance of our products being installed properly. Aside from that, because our products are so benefit-heavy, there are so many unique benefits to them that homeowners are never going to hear about unless that contractor presents them. So we're looking for contractors that are accustomed to what we call "systems selling", meaning that they can go in and do a professional presentation to the homeowners, and help them understand what our products will do for them.

**MB:** What are some other ways that you support your dealer base?

**TM:** Lots and lots of training. We provide training as far as installation, sales, the sales process, and marketing and lead generation. We also have an in-house art department, so if a dealer wants to develop a brochure, advertisement, or even a video, we can produce those things for them. An additional value is always trying to hook them up with valuable suppliers that might be beneficial to them and help them with their business. Those can

sometimes be product suppliers, marketing and lead generation professionals, or in the case of [Medallion Bank](#), a great finance option to help their products be more attractive and accessible to more homeowners.

**MB:** It sounds like you're doing a lot to set yourself apart from your competitors. Is there anything else that makes your company stand alone in the manufacturing industry?

**TM:** I think it really is that we see ourselves as part of the home improvement industry, not the roofing industry. Most manufacturers are about doing exactly that—manufacturing and selling products. We, on the other hand, are much more about building relationships with contractors that contribute to their success. Bottom line is, unless the contractors selling our products are successful, we're not going to be successful. And so everything we do is to help our dealers be successful.

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