



Nine Line: One of America's Fastest Growing Businesses

WHO IS NINE LINE?

Nine Line Apparel is a lifestyle brand that aims to reinvigorate a sense of patriotism and national pride in America. It is veteran-owned and operated and has become one of the fastest-growing companies in the U.S. The apparel company and its nonprofit organization, Nine Line Foundation, raise hundreds of thousands of dollars annually for veterans in need.

THE STORY

Nine Line Apparel was founded in 2012 by brothers Daniel and Tyler Merritt – both Army Captains – Tyler's wife Angela, and Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) graduate Myles Burke.

In the military, a "nine line" is a medevac request for a soldier that is injured on the battlefield. After years of service and multiple combat deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq, the brothers moved back to Savannah and began a small promotions company. Around this time, one of Tyler's friends tragically lost three limbs on the battlefield, and the brothers began printing and selling t-shirts to raise additional assistance for the family.

This kick-started the idea to use their creative skills on a larger scale to raise money for wounded service members. Soon after, Nine Line Apparel was born.

With the help of Tyler's wife, Angela, and civilian SCAD graduate, Myles, the team developed a business plan and strategic design and began creating product in Tyler's garage, before moving into a 1,500 sq. ft. house on Whitmarsh Island.

Their line of edgy, patriotic apparel took off almost immediately, and supply could barely keep up with demand. The team outgrew the house and moved operations to a 5,000 sq. ft. facility near downtown Savannah in 2014, where they increased operations and opened a storefront.

Like most true startups, Nine Line does everything in-house – from product manufacturing, to marketing and shipping. As they've grown, Nine Line has remained focused on hiring veterans, military spouses and patriotic Americans to handle the increase in production.

Company:

Nine Line

Industry:

Small Business
Apparel

What Georgia provided Nine Line:

- Partnerships with Georgia companies and the Savannah Economic Development Authority helped the company with initial funds and investment.
- State and local officials have helped with hiring and job training of employees.

Awards:

- **2016 Inc. 5000 List:**
 - #31 fastest-growing company in the U.S.
 - #3 fastest-growing retail company in the U.S.
 - #3 fastest-growing Georgia company
- **Entrepreneur of the Year,** Savannah Chamber of Commerce, 2016
- **Best Designed Website,** BigCommerce, 2016
- **Fastest-growing Online Retailer,** Internet Retailer, 2016

In just four short years, Nine Line has grown from 4 employees to 140 and has a fanbase of more than 1 million globally. While most of their product is sold in America, they reach consumers worldwide, from Australia to England to the Middle East. The company brings in over \$15 million annually, making it one of the top 5 fastest-growing retail companies in the nation.

By the end of 2017, they will build and move into a 50,000 sq. ft. facility on 300 acres outside of Savannah – a location that will become their permanent home. They also anticipate hiring an additional 100 employees in the next two years.

While the apparel business is booming, the brothers remain rooted in their mission to serve veterans in need and bring pride back to the country. Through the company's nonprofit organization, Nine Line Foundation, the team builds houses for disabled and injured veterans and hosts many events to raise capital for veteran causes. In 2016, their trek across the Rockies singlehandedly raised \$140,000.

Nine Line continues to grow and has also ventured into the beverage industry, offering lines of both coffee and wine.

HOW GEORGIA HELPED

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“Our partnership with Daniel Defense and the assistance we’ve gotten from SEDA [Savannah Economic Development Authority] has helped us identify new opportunities to grow our footprint beyond the state.”

– Daniel Merritt, Owner, Nine Line Apparel

