Commercial HVAC



Steve Martin (second left) and Seth Martin (far right) with a team for Four Star employees at a volunteer community event.

How Four Star Mechanical Became a National Leader in VRF and Mission-Critical HVAC Solutions

Four Star Mechanical's evolution from a small Ohio shop to a national leader in VRF innovation and mission-critical HVAC solutions shows how precision, partnerships, and people-focused growth can redefine what a modern mechanical contractor can achieve.

Dan Vastyan

Key Highlights

- Founded in 1992 in Hamilton, Ohio, Four Star Mechanical has expanded into a leading national contractor specializing in commercial and industrial HVAC projects.
- Four Star's project portfolio includes complex environments like data centers and mission-critical facilities, demonstrating extensive expertise in high-stakes settings.
- Leadership's community focus is exemplified through partnerships with Conquest Work Force, helping individuals with past struggles find meaningful employment, with 10% of the workforce now comprising program graduates.

Founded in 1992 by Steve Martin in Hamilton, Ohio, Four Star Mechanical began with just four employees. Today, the company has grown into a leading commercial and industrial contractor serving clients throughout the country.

While its roots are in Southwest Ohio, Four Star's reach extends far beyond, driven by strong relationships and a reputation for high-performance solutions. Steve Martin, the president of the firm, and his son, Seth Martin, vice president of operations, continue to lead the company's growth and expansion of its national presence.

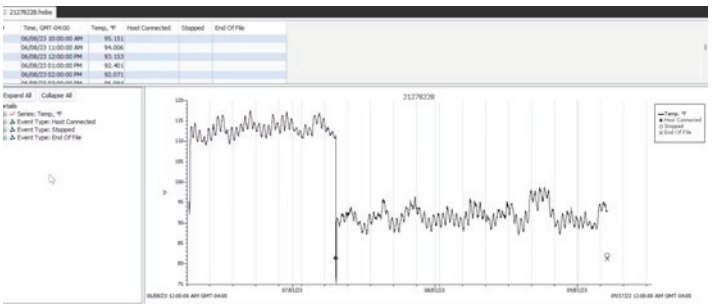
Over the past 15 years, Four Star, which is now a Kelso Industries company, transitioned from a traditional me-

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chanical firm into an early adopter and specialist in VRF technology. That shift sparked a focus on energy-efficient, design-forward solutions, positioning the company as a leader in design-build and design-assist projects.

Four Star's project portfolio includes health care facilities, banks, hospitality developments, and church networks, with major projects across Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. The company brings extensive experience working in complex environments, including SCIF rooms, data centers, and mission-critical infrastructure.

By maintaining close, long-term partnerships with high-priority clients, Four Star Mechanical continues to deliver tailored solutions for complex and large-scale commercial projects nationwide.



Transformer inlet temperatures, pre- and post-installation

Mission Critical

Just minutes from Four Star Mechanical's shop is a major facility operated by a global leader in aerospace maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) services. The company specializes in engine and component repair, airframe services, avionics, and engineering support for both fixed-wing and rotary aircraft. Since opening in 2007, the site has experienced steady growth, including the addition of a 206,000-square-foot expansion to its original 236,000-square-foot floor plan.

In 2024, the facility's leadership contacted Four Star with concerns about overheating in their main electrical room — a critical 2,500-square-foot space housing four transformers and extensive switchgear. Four Star's team investigated the issue and discovered that rising cooling loads, driven by increased production demands, had outpaced the room's original cross-ventilation system.

Over a multi-month data logging period, Steve Martin tracked internal temperatures consistently exceeding 100° F, with peaks as high as 116° F — far above the customer's target. To address this, Four Star designed and installed a dedicated cooling system using Fujitsu AIRSTAGE V-series VRF equipment, providing 32 tons of cooling capacity.

In May 2024, Four Star technicians completed the project in under two weeks, installing four, one-to-one, eight-ton VRF systems with high-static air handlers and rooftop condensing units. This approach not only doubled the required cooling capacity but also ensured full system redundancy — an essential safeguard in the high-stakes aerospace environment, where downtime can severely impact operations.

To further enhance reliability, the new systems were integrated with the facility's Building Management System (BMS) for remote monitoring. Since the upgrade, the average temperature at the transformer inlet has dropped significantly, improving operational safety and reliability.



Four Star designed and installed four Fujitsu AIRSTAGE 8-ton high-static air handlers to provide cooling to the electrical room.

Positive Impact, Times Two

For over 30 years, Four Star Mechanical has built its reputation on a solution-oriented approach that continues to drive steady growth. With expansion, however, comes the ongoing challenge of recruiting and retaining skilled technical talent. Steve Martin saw an opportunity to address this challenge while giving back to the communities Four Star serves.

Steve Martin now serves as chairman of the board for Conquest Work Force, a nonprofit organization dedicat-

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Graduates of the Conquest Work Force program make up about 10% of Four Star's Team

ed to helping individuals re-enter society following struggles with addiction or felony convictions. The program offers a structured path forward, providing life coaching, counseling, recovery support, education, and a second-chance step program.

A key part of Conquest's mission is job placement, connecting individuals with temporary roles that often evolve into long-term employment. Four Star Mechanical is one of several employers that partner with Conquest, and today, graduates of the program make up 10% of Four Star's workforce.



Graduates of the Conquest Work Force program make up about 10% of Four Star's Team

"There are a lot of great people in bad circumstances," said Steve Martin. "They need a real chance to rebuild confidence and support their families. Our company believes in this program and has witnessed firsthand the mutual benefit that programs like this can have for the business, community, and individuals needing a hand up." By aligning workforce development with community impact, Four Star not only fills critical roles within the company but also helps create meaningful opportunities for people seeking a fresh start.

Ever Forward

Looking forward, Steve and Seth Martin have outlined clear, ambitious goals to drive sustainable growth and set new industry standards at Four Star Mechanical. Over the next five years, the company plans to launch a comprehensive employee well-being program focused on physical safety, mental health, and financial resilience.

Strategic growth remains a top priority, emphasizing organic expansion through client referrals, joint ventures, and strong partnerships with general contractors and facility managers. Four Star also aims to strengthen its position as a preferred installer and service expert for leading HVAC and VRF brands, actively contributing real-time feedback to their research and development efforts.



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Looking further ahead to the next decade, Four Star intends to build a network of subcontractors and suppliers who share the company's commitment to safety, quality, and high-performance execution.

"Ultimately, our long-term goal is to become the market benchmark, recognized across the HVAC industry as the subcontractor that consistently delivers unparalleled quality, safety, and reliability," said Seth Martin. "These objectives position Four Star for both growth and industry leadership."

This commitment ensures that Four Star Mechanical will remain a trusted partner and industry leader well into the future.

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