

# CEO CFO



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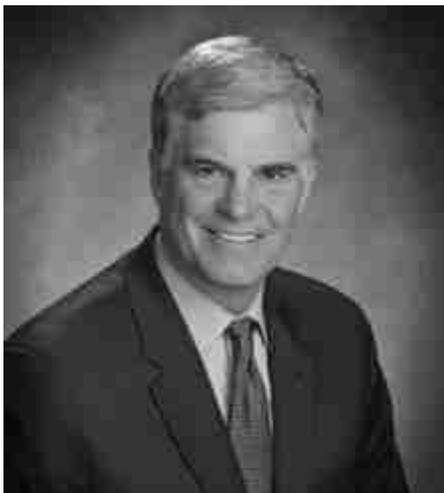
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## The Worldwide Leader In Laser Welding For The Automotive Industry, Noble International Is Focused On Further Penetration Into The Global Auto Manufacturing Market And The Diversification Of Their Product And Industry Base

Consumer Goods  
Auto Parts  
(NOBL-NASDAQ)

Noble International, Ltd.

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**Thomas L. Saeli**  
Chief Executive Officer

### BIO:

Mr. Saeli is the CEO of Noble International, Ltd. Previously, he served as Vice President of Corporate Development for Lear Corporation, where he was responsible for worldwide investment/transactional activities, strategic planning, shareholder oversight for 35 global joint ventures and alliances, and negotiation of other strategic alliances. Prior to working at Lear, Mr. Saeli was a partner with Oxford Investment Group and also served in various corporate positions at Pepsico, Inc. and CBS, Inc. He earned a BA in Economics from

Hamilton College and an MBA in Finance and Accounting from Columbia University Graduate School.

### Company Profile:

Noble International, Ltd. is a leading supplier of metal related automotive parts, component assemblies and value-added services to the automotive industry, utilizing Laser Welding and Roll Form technology. As an automotive supplier, Noble provides design, engineering, manufacturing, program management and other services to the automotive market. Noble delivers integrated component solutions, technological leadership and product innovation to original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and Tier I automotive parts suppliers thereby helping its customers increase their productivity while controlling costs.

Interview conducted by:  
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor  
CEOCFOinterviews.com

**CEOCFO:** Mr. Saeli: What is the vision for Noble today?

**Mr. Saeli:** "Noble is a worldwide leader in Laser Welding and Roll Forming technology. We have a leading market share in North America, Europe, and China in Laser Welding. Today, our customers are mostly automotive. Our vision for the future is three-fold. First, our goal is to continue to expand our business within the automotive industry worldwide with both existing customers and new customers, particularly the Asian based OEMs like Toyota and Honda, and to expand our initiatives in Asia and other rapidly growing regions of the world. Second, we will increase our product base by continuing to develop technologies that complement Laser Welding and Roll Forming.

Third, we will diversify our industry base to include industries other than automotive."

**CEOCFO:** What is the plan to accomplish those goals?

**Mr. Saeli:** We diversified our customer base significantly in August 2007 when we combined with ArcelorMittal's Laser Welding division. Prior to the combination, about 85% of our business was with the "Detroit 3". Today, only about 45% of our business is with these same three customers. In addition, Noble has two joint ventures (JVs) in China, which is the most rapidly growing automotive market in the world. We also have businesses in other emerging markets like Thailand, India and Slovakia. We continue to review our investment plans to expand our business into other geographical regions. We believe that a global presence is necessary in the automotive industry. Auto manufacturers are also increasing the importance of global platforms, which are programs that have a common design and are produced in more than one region of the world. For this global platform strategy to be truly successful, the OEMs require global companies like Noble to produce their products worldwide.

"We have an R&D team that is continuously investigating technologies that satisfy our customers' needs and supplement our current technologies and processes. We work closely with ArcelorMittal, our main shareholder and the world's largest steel producer, investigating ways to optimize the manufacture and design of Laser Welded Blanks. ArcelorMittal spent \$70 million last year on automotive research and development alone, far more than a company of Noble's size could do

on its own. We believe this gives us an important competitive advantage.

In order to achieve our third goal of industry diversification, we have a cross-functional team of sales associates and engineers that evaluate opportunities for our products to support non-automotive customers. We currently have business in the commercial furniture industry, and we would like to expand into other industrial markets.”

**CEOCFO:** How are you faring in the current economic situation; what effect is it having on Noble?

**Mr. Saeli:** “Our automotive business today is divided into roughly 45% North American, 45% Western European, and 10% Asian and Eastern European. We have certainly seen a negative impact from the economic situation in North America. Production volumes are at the lowest level in fifteen years, which has created a very challenging business environment. In response, we have been reducing costs and evaluating our organizational design to become as efficient as possible. By the end of 2008, we will have closed two plants in North America, and significantly reduced our overhead. The volume declines we are experiencing as a result of the worldwide financial crisis are unlike anything the world has experienced in recent history, and we are working aggressively to respond to this current environment.”

**CEOCFO:** You have a large product mix; are you making any changes?

**Mr. Saeli:** “Our two main technologies, Laser Welding and Roll Forming, yield a variety of products that supply our customers with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Auto Body Solutions®. Noble’s products range from energy absorbing bumpers to large structural body sides to shorter pillars and mass efficient underbody rails. We have a broad product mix today but we are always seeking ways to optimize the design of our products to meet our customers’ weight and cost reduction targets.”

**CEOCFO:** What are your plans for expanding in Asia?

**Mr. Saeli:** “We have been very aggressive in Asia over the last couple of years. Noble has 2 joint ventures in China, one with the largest Chinese steel producer and the other with the third largest Chinese steel producer. We believe that we have a strong position in China to ensure we participate in the future growth of this market. We are currently in the process of opening a manufacturing facility in Thailand through a joint venture with Sumitomo Corporation. This JV will produce Laser Welded components for light trucks, and it is interesting to note that Thailand is a very large truck market, second only to North America. We are

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very enthusiastic about our expansion into Thailand. We also have a joint venture in India, which is another automotive market that is expecting double-digit growth. Automotive growth in Asia and Eastern Europe is generally much more dramatic and positive than growth in Western Europe and North America, so we will continue to increase our presence there.”

**CEOCFO:** As CEO, what are the challenges in running an organization that is so spread-out geographically and what does Noble know to make it work well?

**Mr. Saeli:** “I personally have had a lot of experience in global organizations, even prior to joining Noble three years ago as CEO. At Lear Corporation, which was

one of the largest global automotive suppliers in the world. I spent a lot of time working in Asia as well as Europe. I had significant exposure to operating a global organization. At Noble, we have a management team that is becoming very familiar with how to run a global business. We have an experienced, diverse management team in both Europe and North America. In Asia, we benefit from our local partners’ cultural knowledge, and we put in place some of Noble’s associates in each country to help manage the joint ventures.”

**CEOCFO:** Please tell us about your recent litigation reward.

**Mr. Saeli:** “We acquired Pullman Industries, a Roll Forming supplier, in October 2006. The recent litigation reward related to a settlement for breaches of contractual representations and warranties from the sellers of the Pullman Industries business to us.”

**CEOCFO:** Do you see more acquisitions for the future; is that part of your strategy going forward?

**Mr. Saeli:** “In the last couple of years, we went from about \$400 million in revenue to about \$1.2 billion, and a lot of that growth resulted from acquisitions. We are now optimizing our current business in order to run One Noble world-class operation. At the mo-

ment, we do not anticipate any acquisitions in the short-term.”

**CEOCFO:** Tell me a bit in general about Laser Welded Blanks (LWBs) and where they fit into the industry and increased use.

**Mr. Saeli:** “With Laser Welded Blanks, you take two steel blanks, or flat parts, and you use lasers to weld them together. Lasers allow you to join steel blanks of dissimilar thicknesses and properties, and it gives you more flexibility to put weight and strength exactly where you need it. Doing so reduces vehicle weight because you do not use heavy gauge material everywhere, only where you absolutely need it. It creates scrap savings because you

can nest more small parts within a steel coil to reduce engineered scrap and increase material yield. Laser Welding also allows you to selectively incorporate cutting-edge steel grades such as Usibor® and Ductibor®, which are advanced high strength steels developed by our main shareholder, ArcelorMittal. Laser Welded Blanks can eliminate reinforcements, thereby reducing part count and simplifying assembly processes. There is currently an average of five Laser Welded Blanks per vehicle globally and we have identified up to 30 potential applications for a vehicle. We are confident that as our customers seek lighter weight, lower cost design solutions, the average number of Laser Welded Blanks per vehicle will increase.”

**CEO CFO:** What gives you the competitive edge and why are customers choosing your products?

**Mr. Saeli:** “Noble is very proactive with providing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Auto Body Solutions® early in the design phase, which is attractive to our customers. We have access to great technology, such as P-Tech®, a method of Hot Forming Advanced High Strength Steels, and a dedicated technology for Laser Welding Usibor® and Ductibor® grades of steel. As I mentioned, earlier, we also have access to ArcelorMittal’s R&D activity, which is very important. When it comes to supply chain optimization, Noble has a global footprint. Customers today are looking for global suppliers who can supply them locally in any region of the world. We also run highly efficient manufacturing operations with an emphasis on safety, lean manufacturing and common operating metrics.”

**CEO CFO:** You are looking to attract additional talent to support your growth; what do you look for over and above the tangible experience?

**Mr. Saeli:** “Noble is a company that is very entrepreneurial. We are committed to a relentless drive to provide value for our customers. We are team-focused, so egos are not tolerated within our company. We want associates who can strengthen our team and add value to our company.”

**CEO CFO:** What is the financial picture?

**Mr. Saeli:** “With our diversification activity, Noble actually had its best second quarter in the company’s history and that was despite the decline in vehicle volumes in North America. We see markets weakening around the world and we are quite conservative in terms of our financial picture. Our financial performance is highly dependent on automotive production volumes, and production volumes are declining around the world at the moment. We expect that the North American market for 2009 will be in a recessionary environment and Western Europe will also have a production decline in vehicles in 2009.”

**CEO CFO:** Why should potential investors be interested?

**Mr. Saeli:** “Noble is an interesting investment for many reasons and I will highlight a couple of them here. Today’s operating environment requires OEMs to reduce costs, improve fuel efficiency, reduce vehicle weight and have awareness of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. They need to accomplish this goal while at the same time maintaining or increasing the safety of their vehicles. And finally, they are looking for credible global suppliers who can produce their products in the main auto-

motive markets around the world. With this scenario as a back drop, you can see that Noble fits well in helping to provide a solution for the OEMs. Our products reduce weight, improve crashworthiness, and utilize less steel, which helps with the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint. We do this at a cost saving and we can produce in the main automotive markets globally. We are also proactive in helping our customers develop solutions utilizing our technical strength.

**CEO CFO:** What is your focus as CEO?

**Mr. Saeli:** “My job as CEO is to set direction for the company and to ensure that the strategy is communicated to the Noble team. I focus on hiring the best people to put in the right positions of the company based on their leadership abilities and skill set. I also meet with customers, suppliers, and investors. Understanding all stakeholders’ needs is a key part of my communication activities.”

**CEO CFO:** What should people reading about Noble International remember most?

**Mr. Saeli:** “They should remember that in the last year, Noble International has been aggressive in diversifying our business. We diversified geographically and expanded our customer base dramatically. A year ago, 85% of Noble’s business was with Ford, GM, and Chrysler in North America. Today, no one customer is more than about 17% of our business. We have a very good cost structure and I think when global economies stabilize and automotive production volumes are restored, the advantage of all of our strategic actions and cost structure will become evident.”



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