

# SUCCESS STORY: ERWIN HYMER GROUP NORTH AMERICA



## ABOUT ERWIN HYMER GROUP NORTH AMERICA

ERWIN HYMER GROUP  
NORTH AMERICA  
*the leisure experience*

In early 2016, Erwin Hymer Group (EHG) —Europe’s largest motorhome and caravan manufacturer—acquired Roadtrek Motorhomes, Inc., a long-standing manufacturer of Class B motorhomes headquartered in Waterloo.

Roadtrek (now known as Erwin Hymer Group North America, Inc.) had caught EHG’s attention for a number of reasons. An industry leader for compact leisure vehicles with a 40-year track record, Roadtrek had a market share of 30% in North America—and a management team with excellent knowledge of the US and Canadian markets. Moreover, the company was well known for its innovative technology, including solar energy, heating, and air conditioning controls via smartphone or tablet.

EHG’s acquisition of Roadtrek enabled them to expand their market penetration and successfully enter the North American market.

## ALL ABOUT INNOVATION

One year post-acquisition, EHGNA is situated in two locations across Waterloo: its original offices in Kitchener, Ontario, for manufacturing, and a former BlackBerry building in Cambridge, Ontario, for Research and Development and manufacturing.

“The building was a big selling point for Erwin Hymer Group North America, because it’s close to our Kitchener location, and has the land for future growth,” says Lisa Phillips, marketing manager for EHGNA.

All groups in the company have been growing significantly in the last year—and continue to do so.

“We’ve now quadrupled our space for R&D, and we have a lot more area for prototyping things,” says lead innovation engineer, Charlie Rossi. “We like to incorporate new technology and get things to market as quickly as possible—and there’s a ton of talent and innovation in this area that we can pull from.”

“In fact, it’s possible our North American location may eventually become the technology hub for the entire company, pushing tech out on a global level.”

## ENGAGEMENT IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

According to Rossi and Phillips, achieving business success in Waterloo is all about engagement.

“It’s really important to talk to other companies and organizations, which can help you create new ideas,” says Rossi. “You can’t stay stagnant if you want to be successful. But, when you engage with others, even if they’re not in your industry, the information they share with you can help your business grow. Basically, the more you dialogue with others, the more you can ensure your company stays current and relevant.”

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Rossi points to the University of Waterloo (UWaterloo) as an example of how businesses engaging with academic institutions can lead to innovative partnerships.

“The university is one of the best in Canada for world-changing research and innovation, and on top of that, they’re very forward-thinking in terms of working with companies in the area,” he says. “When students come up with new technology, the school has excellent ways of linking up with different industries.”

Engaging with other organizations in Waterloo has helped EHGNA increase its innovative capacity, stay on top of up-and-coming trends and get noticed.

As a key example, EHGNA recently partnered with UWaterloo, becoming the first two organizations to be approved to test autonomous vehicles on public roads.

“All the insight we’ve received has been really advantageous to our company, because we’re now getting a lot of attention and support from governmental officials,” says Rossi. “Being in this high-visibility tech quarter has afforded us many opportunities.”



### SUCCESS SHAPED BY THE COMMUNITY

For businesses considering a move to the region, Phillips and Rossi only have good words about Waterloo and surrounding area.

“The lifestyle here is very open and multicultural, and there’s a great variety of food and nice housing areas,” says Phillips.

“It’s also a convenient short distance to Toronto, so we have easy access to a bigger city if we want to visit it or do business with it,” adds Rossi. “But the really nice thing about Waterloo is you can still live in a smaller city and have all the resources and culture you need; plus you get that tighter-knit group feel than you would get in a larger city.”

### MAKING THE RIGHT CONNECTIONS

Rossi and Phillips also credit Waterloo EDC for helping to promote EHGNA, and fostering relationships in the area.

“Waterloo EDC has put us in touch with a bunch of people and companies, and will even let us know if the university is doing something interesting or innovative there that aligns with our business,” says Rossi. “They really go out of their way to ensure we’re talking to the right people and getting a chance in the spotlight and being in the public eye.”

Recently, EHGNA’s manufacturing line was featured in a video showcasing how Waterloo is inventing the future, highlighting their involvement in the local innovation ecosystem.



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