

SUCCESS STORY: ESENTIRE



ABOUT ESENTIRE

While most software companies are focused on building “bigger walls” to protect mid-sized enterprises from cyber threats, eSentire stands out as a true innovator with a different approach.

As the creator of “managed detection and response” (a new category of cybersecurity), eSentire’s software-as-a-service is about detecting complex threats that technology alone can miss and preventing business-altering events.

“Basically, our game is that when we detect the bad guys, we disrupt what they’re doing—and then we tell our customers that we solved the problems afterward,” says J. Paul Haynes, president and COO of eSentire.

By solving a problem in a completely different way, use of eSentire’s products has spread worldwide to more than 50 countries.

EARLY DAYS

As with many startups in Waterloo Region, eSentire was created in 2001 by two local students—specifically, math graduates from the University of Waterloo.

Today, eSentire has approximately 300 employees in its Waterloo Region headquarters; and another 125 spread across locations in Ireland, New York, Seattle and England.

eSentire’s headquarters houses the company’s primary data centre, lead security operations centre and network operations, product design, sales and marketing, customer care and the leadership team.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

According to Haynes, being in the Waterloo area has created a host of recruitment opportunities for eSentire.

“The area of cybersecurity is faced with huge shortages of skilled people but we figured out a solution to that, which is cemented in the fabric of Waterloo,” he says. “We hire a lot of threat analysts who come from the local colleges, as well as developers from the local universities.”

To date, more than 75% of eSentire’s development team has come through the University of Waterloo.

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“In my opinion, from a talent pool perspective, the Toronto-Waterloo corridor is second only to Silicon Valley,” Haynes adds. “And since there is a very high concentration of engineers in this part of the world, being in Waterloo has been very complimentary to our hiring plans.”

eSentire has also benefited from hiring students for short-term internships and co-ops.

“Essentially, we get to test-drive them, and they get to find out how it is to work for us,” says Haynes.

PARTNERING WITH ACADEMIA

Over the last several years, eSentire has also worked closely with nearby post-secondary institutions on multiple projects related to cybersecurity.

“We’ve found the academic ecosystem has been very willing to work with us, which has been fantastic,” says Haynes. “This has allowed us to solve real-world problems with students as well as some of the world’s leading researchers.”

Among its projects, eSentire has worked on machine learning (a subset of artificial intelligence) with post-graduates from the University of Guelph, collaborated on a cyber-threat strategy with Conestoga College, and partnered with the University of Waterloo and Ontario Centre for Excellence to research data analytics



J. Paul Haynes, president and COO of eSentire.

TAPPING INTO THE COMMUNITY

According to Haynes, much of eSentire’s success is due to networking.

“You really have to be in the community to know about these things,” says Paul. “We’ve become part of this rich ecosystem in Waterloo where when there’s a new program—for example, one of the universities is looking for a partner—someone has referred us, and we’ve been contacted for assistance.”

For businesses coming to the region, Haynes recommends getting “plugged in” with economic/business development organizations.

“I’ve personally been involved with Innovation Guelph, and eSentire is a member of Communitech,” he says. “These groups have programs applicable to us, as well as training and events where you can get to know everyone in the business community. It’s been great for recruitment too, because the competition for talent in Waterloo is pretty high. But the key is that you have to get involved in the community to know and access these things.”

Haynes commends Communitech for helping businesses set up in Waterloo.

“Communitech really knows who’s who in the ‘zoo,’” he says. “They can guide you through important things if you’re going to move a business here. They can figure out office locations for you, bringing in that lens that not only encompasses what the business needs, but where its employees will live.”

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LIVING IN WATERLOO

Haynes came to Waterloo in 1982—and has made it his home ever since.

“I find you have a better quality of life in Waterloo than if you were in a larger city like Toronto,” he says.

He attributes much of that to the layout of the region. “The area is more open and spread out, not at all dense, so it’s easier to access the outdoors.”

Being in Waterloo is also ideal for people who enjoy a reasonably short commute.

“My drive to eSentire every day is always 22 minutes—it’s very predictable and helps with that work-life balance,” he says.



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