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HUNTER ENGINEERING COMPANY

BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME!

Darcy Tallon, Director of Canadian Operations &
John Zentz, Vice-President of Sales

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Hunter Engineering Company Build it and They Will Come!

New Hunter facility already has bookings.

BY KRYSZYNA LAGOWSKI

When Hunter Engineering Company decided to expand their Canadian headquarters, they had more than just bricks and mortar in mind.

“We built our new facility in Aurora, Ontario, to provide a venue to our business partners, for training and collaboration, where we could help address some of the challenges we face,” says John Zentz, Vice-President of Sales, Hunter Engineering Company. “We have many types of relationships including OEM vehicle and tire manufacturers, larger national accounts, plus smaller independent shops.”

State of the art

The new building is approximately 50,000 sq. ft., more than triple the size of Hunter’s former home. “It was a good space for 14 years, but we’ve grown significantly over the last decade,” says Zentz.

Now, there’s a state-of-the-art media centre, with large projection screens tied into a computerized audio visual system. There’s also a separate classroom with an adjoining garage for theoretical as

well as practical technician training and a larger demonstration area designated as the “Power Bay.” Here, Hunter can demonstrate the integration of their latest products and technology in a backdrop simulating the environment and process taking place within the service entry and workshop areas of today’s modern automotive service centre.

“A tire manufacturer may be introducing a new product requiring new/revised installation procedures,” explains Dino Hatz, Business Development Manager, Hunter Engineering. “They can use our facility to



Darcy Tallon, Director of Canadian Operations & John Zentz, Vice-President of Sales

PHOTO: JACK KAZMIERSKI

organize training for tire installers and service advisors who will have to communicate new information to the consumer. A car manufacturer/national account can organize sales or technical training in our media centre, which accommodates up to 70 people.”

The “Power Bay” is set up to simulate a modern auto service centre, with a service



The new facility provides a venue to Hunter Engineering Company business partners, for training and collaboration.

PHOTOS: MICHAEL VAN LEUR



writers' area, a drive-thru reception lane, plus customer lounge. "Hunter includes a workshop management system, 'Hunter-Net,' on all of their PC based platforms gathering and organizing data recorded at all stations, then uploads it to their cloud," says Hatz. "The data can be reviewed remotely. We also produce service guest education media that can be viewed in the lounge or reception areas." The video and slide-shows help explain and demonstrate some of the technical aspects of various services that can be offered plus benefits of proper vehicle maintenance. "It's a better venue for training service writers how to effectively inform customers about their vehicles' health, assisting them in making better informed decisions around maintenance issues."

Investing in the industry

"Our new headquarters gives us more opportunity for closer and more frequent interaction with our partners, and to demonstrate our products," says Darcy Tallon, Director of Canadian Operations. "This is just a small piece of the larger picture—we're investing in the local economy as well as the industry."

Tallon notes many companies are downsizing, relocating to smaller offices and/or web based business. Assemblies/sub-assemblies for their products are increasingly sourced offshore to cut cost. "Instead of downsizing, we're growing," he says. "Most of our products feature North-American made content designed and built in the U.S. with final assembly and testing occurring at our customer's location by our factory trained technical and training representatives. We're adding new warehouse and logistics personnel as well as field representation."

Many industry head offices are located in Toronto. "Quite a few of our colleagues

will be flying field resources in and out for various reasons, so at the same time, they can leverage the use of our facility to further capitalize on some of their expenses," says Tallon.

Hunter has relationships with over 20 vehicle manufacturers, and most major tire manufacturers. Previously, they had offered their space to their industry colleagues and clients for training. "We were somewhat limited, and had to give our logistics staff three days' notice to clear a path through the warehouse, as we'd have to drive a car through to get a vehicle onto the alignment rack," chuckles Tallon.

Already booked

Even before its grand opening in September, the facility has been booked. "The classroom with the adjoining garage is very popular, we're doing new product introductions, and launching new programs," says Hatz. It's an ideal space for car manufacturers, who may need to ramp up training technicians/service advisors in advance of introducing a new model. "Our facility is ideal for training staff on the theoretical and/or hands-on aspects of undercar programs and products," he explains.

There's also ample free parking, available catering, and a planned daily shuttle service from Pearson Airport.

Guests of the facility can stay at local hotels, where Hunter arranges for pickups by bus or limousine. "We're also considering providing onsite evening entertainment," muses Hatz.

Only one of its kind

As far as he knows, Tallon says this is the only facility of its kind in Canada. "Hunter not only installs equipment onsite, but also sends technical representatives to

assemble it and provide instruction on its operation and care."

He compares it to buying a car at a dealership. "In most cases, you can safely assume the potential buyer has a driver's license, and can competently operate the vehicle," Tallon says. "The dealership demonstrates how to work some of the unique features or functions of their product—stereo, navigational system, and/or other new technology."

But what if the client wants to obtain a driver's permit, improve on his driving skills, find out more about how the vehicle works? Hunter offers training courses and certification for a variety of courses in alignment and vehicle ride diagnostics from beginner to expert. "These are one to five day courses," explains Zentz.

The grand opening will be spread out over three days, and include their annual customer appreciation golf tournament. "We're bringing in all our field resources to assist, so that customers can meet their support team," says Zentz. "This is going to be a great asset to Hunter and the industry, and we want to celebrate it appropriately with our colleagues and clients." 🍷

