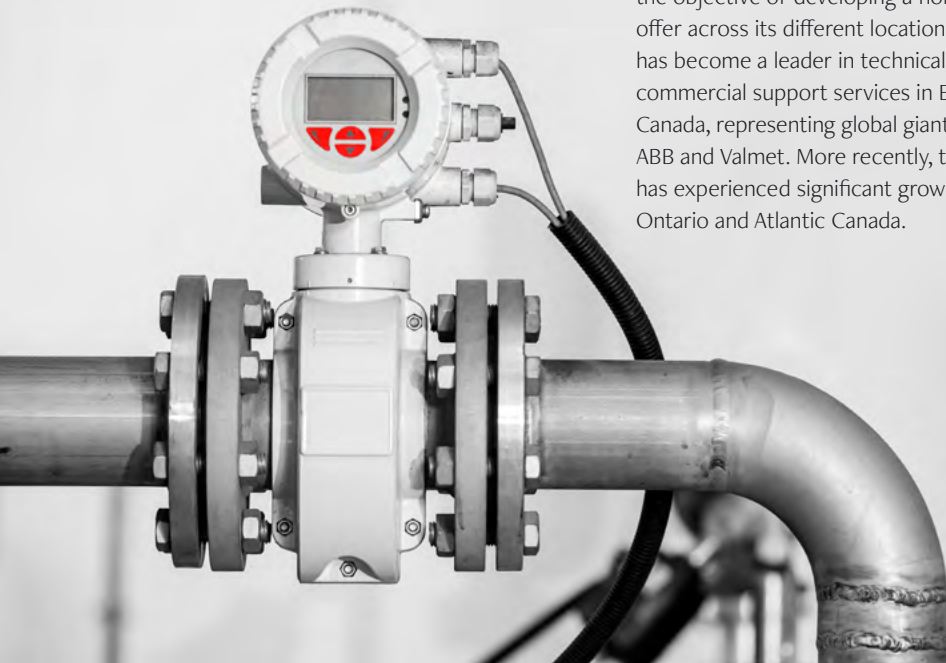


A highly specific and technical sector

Everest operates in a highly specialized technical sector whose clientele is mainly made up of industrial processing companies from various industries: pulp and paper, petrochemicals, mining and metals, water treatment, and so on. All of these users require a great number of measurement instruments, valves and control products to manufacture their end products. The equipment and related services Everest provide, enables customers to improve product quality as well as efficiencies in manufacturing processes, while minimizing their environmental footprint.

In this field, Everest acts as an intermediary between manufacturers and users. In the 1980s and 1990s, there were many like Everest in Quebec. Each manufacturer entrusted the sale of its instruments to different suppliers based on established geographical zones. Because of this fragmentation, intermediaries were numerous and generally made up of small companies.

Since the 2000s, Everest Automation has gradually established itself as one of the most important channels connecting manufacturers and their customers. With the objective of developing a homogenous offer across its different locations, Everest has become a leader in technical and commercial support services in Eastern Canada, representing global giants such as ABB and Valmet. More recently, the company has experienced significant growth in Ontario and Atlantic Canada.



The genesis...

A tough choice

Eric Maier is the son of Matthias Maier, who in 1971 founded Canada Panel Instruments, one of the entities at the origin of Everest Automation. He thus fell into the entrepreneurial world at an early age.

Origin



Matthias Maier



Canada Panel, Roxboro, 1979



Nicole Maier: an invaluable support for the development of Canada Panel.

Di lem ma



James, Matthias and Eric

Between the ages of 14 and 18, Eric learns about the various sectors of the company through his summer jobs.

At the beginning of his university studies, he develops a passion for music and thinks of making a career out of it. He also studies psychology before entering business school. So, when comes the time to enter the world of work, he hesitates for a long time about the right path to choose.

It is a teacher and mentor who encourages him to join the family business to benefit from his father's expertise and develop his commercial and entrepreneurial skills. Eric would never regret this choice, despite the enormous success his musical partner, Daniel Bélanger, would enjoy a few years later.

“ I tried many things in my youth. I hesitated for a long time about the right path to follow, until a teacher made me realize that I had a golden opportunity to work alongside my father. ”

“I actually learned a lot from both my parents. I also benefited from a great deal of freedom that enabled me to develop certain business aspects in my own way.”

A passion for sales

Marc Côté studies instrumentation and control more out of realism than any real passion. He completes his studies in the mid-1980s, in a difficult economic climate where jobs are scarce.

After having mailed out over 100 resumes, it is with abandon that he accepts his first job as an inside technical sales representative in his field.

He then changes employers a few times, but always in this field he has come to understand and love. Three months on the job were enough for him to know that he would love this career, with its highly technical aspect, but also the client relations and the freedom it offers.

Then, eager to develop his own vision, he leaves his employer to start Les Contrôles Optima, in 1993, with a single very loyal employee, Marco Bhérier, who himself went on to enjoy great success with the company. His spouse, Denise Garneau, is never far away to lend him administrative help and the necessary moral support.

Like Apple and Google, Marc's company take its first steps in a garage. His father even has to co-sign for a bank loan for the first year. He installs a computer network that is cutting-edge for the time, and soon sales are skyrocketing. The success story now begins.

“ I had already set up a small company during my studies. I knew what I wanted and when the opportunity presented itself, I took it. ”



A lunch meeting that changes everything

It is during a business lunch meeting in 1993 that Marc and Eric meet for the first time.

“At the time, our customers were already keen to reduce the number of suppliers they interacted with. Times were changing and we both knew that we had to expand to survive.”

“ We immediately understood that we would end up working together. ”

Instead of competing against each other, the two men agree to team up and share their sales territory. The seed is planted, and while the companies work in parallel, they do so in close collaboration and already begin to harmonize their way of doing things. Over the next seven years, their goals and values are increasingly combined, eventually merging into a common vision.

In 2000, the stars finally align and the two companies decide to unite to form Everest Automation.





However, Marc and Eric still have to convince Matthias (Eric's father), who is reluctant to the idea of this merger. The businessman still finds it hard to pass the torch, and doubts the benefits of this agreement. But an event would radically change his vision.

That same year, Matthias travels to Nepal to climb the Everest. Unfortunately, the experience is cut short for the experienced entrepreneur, who contracts pneumonia during his stay and has to abandon his dream of reaching the Roof of the World. He returns to Canada a changed man, with a whole new outlook on life.

Everest

This event allows him to better perceive the different business opportunities that this merger offers. He therefore agrees to step aside and hand over the reins to the two young, seasoned entrepreneurs.

From there on, finding a name for the new company becomes rather obvious for Marc and Eric...



The start of a fruitful partnership

Transition is rapid, and while each company had around 15 employees separately, Everest Automation grows to 43 employees after the merger.

In no time, the company becomes an important player in the industry and begins to acquire and integrate new sales lines over the years. One success leads to another and Everest grows rapidly to become one of the main intermediaries in its field in Eastern Canada.

“When we started out, we were both running very small companies. We felt it was vital to grow or we’d be eaten up very quickly. By joining forces, we finally had the capacity to develop and absorb some complementary companies in different territories.”



Eric and Dan Bédard from Mentec



This approach enables the two entrepreneurs to represent their manufacturers in larger, more homogenous and coherent geographical areas. It is a winning formula. In 2018, Everest tackles the Ontario market and gradually establishes itself in the province.

“We bought companies that we felt were essential to our development and to the objectives we had set for ourselves from the outset. Today, we see that our vision at the time was the right one and that the stars were aligned just right.”

Everest also favours its supplier relationships over short-term growth. The managers regularly turn down interesting business opportunities that could enable growth, but at the cost of losing part of the company’s soul. Instead, they opt for organic growth, which remains steady despite the various economic crises.

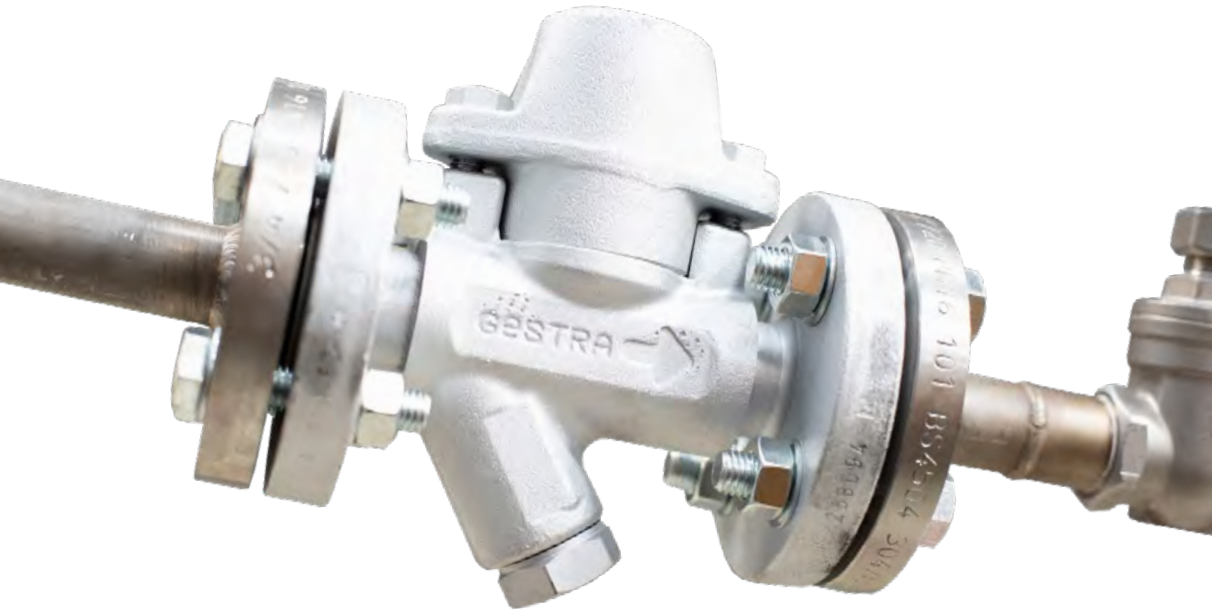
Everest evolves in this way until 2019, when new business opportunities arise.

“ We had the opportunity to acquire companies that we hoped to get but never thought we could. It was really unexpected, but we had the maturity to seize the opportunity. ”

By focusing on patience and remaining within its field of expertise, Everest acquires new territories and develops at its own pace.

“We’ve managed to avoid creating a patchwork monster with competing product brands that are irreconcilable over time. We patiently built a homogenous company that looks like us and that we can control.”

In 2022, the company counts seven offices and nearly 150 employees across Canada. A development that comes with its share of obstacles.



Bigger company, bigger challenges

Of course, the company's ascent is not without its problems. It is not easy to integrate new companies with different teams and different ways of doing things.

“Having 15 employees is easy. We're agile and efficient. However, when the team grows rapidly, things become more complicated. You have to know how to delegate, put the right people in the right place and create a clear, documented, and accessible methodology. This requires a lot of adjustments and inevitably creates tension.”

Periods of economic uncertainty are also critical times when you are in charge of a large company. The choices that have to be made have more far-reaching consequences and can have repercussions over the long term.

“During the 2008 financial crisis, we had to lay off staff one day a week. We did the same for both of us. The boat was hard to steer, but the decisions we made at the time enabled us to get back on our feet even stronger afterwards.”

In fact, they can congratulate themselves on having kept all their employees and come through these times without any layoffs. Today, the company has strengthened its foundation. Strategic choices and the establishment of a reliable, committed team enable Eric and Marc to look to the future with optimism.

“I believe that it’s our vision of entrepreneurship that has enabled Everest to overcome the obstacles.”

“ Making logical decisions, seizing opportunities at the right time, not projecting too far ahead, stabilizing our acquisitions and above all looking after our staff, that's our recipe for longevity. ”



Responsability

Vision and values...

Employees treated like collaborators

At a time when labour is in short supply, many employers are realizing that human resources are crucial to the success of their business. But Eric and Marc have known this for a long time, and have made it an essential part of their company.

Every member of the team has a stake in the company's performance. Thus, in good years, an employee can receive part of their total remuneration in the form of a profit-sharing bonus. The methodology is transparent and everyone knows how the figures are calculated.

The two businessmen have also come up with an original way of rewarding employees who wish to invest in the company. They are offering interested parties the chance to become owners of part of the company's buildings.

Participating employees thus share a large part of the dividends on Everest's buildings in Montreal and Quebec City.

Francois, Eric and Marc, with their spouses



“Some employers offer their employees the chance to buy shares in the company, but shares are volatile, whereas the property value of the building is more stable. It’s another way to make the team benefit from Everest’s success, to show them that they are at the heart of our project.”

In recent years, these investments have yielded a more than interesting annual return in comparison to the initial outlay. In fact, the project has been so successful that the two entrepreneurs have had to set a limit on the amount that employees could invest, so that everyone can benefit from the opportunity.

Marc and Eric also want to support their team members as the cost of living rises. In 2022, they offer a bonus to employees in order to help them absorb the impact of inflation. This type of programme will be regularly re-evaluated to adapt to fluctuating economic conditions.

“ Our employees are the driving force behind our success, and we want to retain them and make them happy to work for us. ”

“Today, everyone talks about the working atmosphere and the happiness of their team, but our employees tell us that it’s true here.”

Transparency with all partners

From the outset of their collaboration, Marc and Eric share the same vision of ethics and relationships with their business partners. They thus implement various procedures to be consistent with these values.

“In the interest of transparency and fairness, we make every effort to treat our partners the same way we would like to be treated.”

To achieve this, the businessmen put in place a strict procedure to be fair to everyone at all times. Throughout the year, they call their suppliers to report on any oversights or errors. This could be material received in excess or not invoiced, sums that the supplier has failed to claim from them or any error that would put their partners at a disadvantage and that Everest is keen to compensate.

“Our employees are aware of our policy in this area and we encourage them to take the initiative to rectify the situation as quickly as possible. We are not the biggest player in North America, but we are known and respected in the industry across North America and even in other parts of the world.”

Behind the scenes...

A shared vision



*The
unifying
leader*

Eric Maier
Cofounder of
Everest Automation

For Eric, entrepreneurship is a team affair. He is keen to develop the business in the right way, without rushing things.

“Growth depends on skills, and that means well-trained people who are happy in their own position.”



*The
determined
entrepreneur*

Marc Côté
Cofounder of
Everest Automation

For Marc, business development depends on the implementation of a strong structure and a reliable, competent, and motivated team.

“I don't believe in the idea of the client as king, I believe in the theory of employee as kings. If your team feels well treated, they will look after your customers well. People generally want to perform and work for a dynamic, well-organized, efficient company that recognizes their efforts.”





An outline of the future...

Retaining expertise

The two businessmen consider that their professional objectives are well on the way to being achieved in the coming years. However, they do not wish to set specific growth targets for themselves.

They do not believe in dollar or percentage growth forecasts. In their view, this puts counter-productive pressure on team members, with targets over which they have no real control. Eric and Marc therefore avoid focusing on such targets so as to not waste time that would be much better invested in concrete actions, such as specific and measurable business development activities, rather than projecting annual sales targets.

“We’ve never really believed in five- or ten-year growth forecasts. There are too many unforeseen events in business. We’re mainly looking to consolidate our assets, and if opportunities arise, we’ll study them in due course.”

Taking action

Focusing on *people*

First and foremost, Eric and Marc want to strengthen their team in a booming employment market. The expertise acquired by their employees forms the bedrock of the company, and it is important to preserve it.

“Our offer is based above all on human skills. With an ageing population, we’re going to have to keep offering our employees better conditions. Our team’s expertise is our main strength.”

As for the rest, the succession already seems assured, with managers trained by employers keen to give them more responsibilities in the future. Even if Eric and Marc are not ready to pass the torch just yet.

“We’re not yet ready to work less in order to travel. What really drives us is working on new projects and growing our business. We really love what we do and we hope our employees do too.”

Eric and Marc speak about their company with a single voice. For them, the success of their business depends first and foremost on the well-being of their employees.

Passion



People, ethics and transparency form the very basis of their business model and condition all their decision-making. They always make sure to stabilize their assets before expanding. This way of doing things keeps the ship afloat by avoiding sudden movements.

In fact, the two businessmen see themselves more as captains of a ship than as entrepreneurs, aware that each crew member is essential to smooth sailing.

For Eric and Marc, running the business is therefore more of a pleasure than a real job. This approach to entrepreneurship still drives them to invest more than 60 hours a week in their company. Always driven by the desire to do better, but the right way.

“ Over the past few years, we have been positioning ourselves in the province of Ontario. We're already reaping the rewards, and there is still plenty of room for exciting growth! ”



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