

caétan bolduc, president prevost car, inc



by mary barton

This May, Prevost's new president and CEO, Caétan Bolduc, visited Marathon Coach headquarters near Eugene, Oregon. While here, he agreed to allow us to write a short profile about him, to introduce you to one of the foremost leaders of the luxury bus conversion industry.

MB: Tell me a little about your background.

GB: I was born in 1957 and grew up in Montreal. My father was a construction supervisor for a home builder. I spent several summers working at uncles' farms; I also worked in construction some summers. For two summers I worked as a mechanic on the James Bay Hydro-Electric construction site in the northern part of Québec. I have a college degree in Mechanical Engineering and a bachelor's degree in the same field. I am a certified engineer. I am very proud of my roots and the background that my parents gave me. They were not rich, but they worked very hard to give my sister and me a good education.

MB: How did you become involved in the bus conversion industry?

GB: I joined Prevost when the company was building the last 35-

foot, 2-axle coach for conversion. Since that time, we have built a few thousand 40- and 45-foot coaches.

MB: How long have you been with Prevost Car?

GB: I started with Prevost in April 1982 as a process technician. At that time, the assembly plant in Ste-Claire (a province of Québec, Canada), was very new. I progressively grew up in the business from 1982 to 1991, moving from technician, to process coordinator, to process and tooling manager for the three manufacturing plants.

In 1993, André Normand, president and co-owner, offered me the position of production vice-president. I was in charge of production and material supply, including planning, purchasing, logistics and warehousing. My responsibilities also included plant engineering and mainte-

nance. In 1998, I was promoted by the board of directors to be Prevost's executive vice-president of operations. In 1998, process engineering was also reporting to me; in 2001, so was R&D.

MB: What are your thoughts about the bus conversion industry?

GB: It is a strong industry built on quality products...the best available. It is an industry that delivers products to the most demanding and selective customers. The customer base is knowledgeable, with strong business and financial backgrounds. Our customers are business people; they know and understand the value of top quality and service. The converter base ranges from very small, to very stable and large, such as Marathon, who has been in partnership with Prevost for two decades, delivering hundreds of top-quality converted coaches.

MB: Do you see a strong market currently?

GB: The market is getting stronger as the events of September 11th are getting behind us and the general economy is improving. We feel the same trend in all other markets that we, and our mother company, Volvo, are in: boat and airplane engines, trucks, construction equipment and coaches.

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MB: From your perspective, has the industry grown in the past few years?

GB: Yes, it has! Because our coaches are built to last much, much longer than any plastic or Class "A" products, all new and older conversions are ending up in happy owners' hands...not in the scrap yard. As a result of this quality, every year new people join our family, from the acquisition of either a brand new or a pre-owned product.

From the converter's side, some are joining in while others are closing their doors. All in all, the strong ones—those who have worked on improving the quality of their products as well as improving their manufacturing processes—have a better chance to face business cycles. In this area, I have been impressed by the visit I made recently to Marathon's manufacturing facili-

ties near Eugene, Oregon. Marathon uses a world-class manufacturing concept of lean manufacturing adapted to the conversion business. The concept is worded such that the employees can understand what to do and how to do it...just ask Carroll White, executive vice president of manufacturing, to talk to you about his system. It is sending a strong message that Marathon is here for the long run.

MB: Marathon Coach and Prevost have always enjoyed a strong partnership, with Marathon being the largest Prevost converter for quite a few years. Marathon has purchased more than 900 Prevost shells since it began business in 1983. Tell me a little bit about that relationship.

GB: We both share the same values, even if we use slightly different words. We have the same foundation: quality, safety, respect for the environment, customer satisfaction, and respect for the individual in a teamwork situation...that is why the match between us is so good. Our relationship would not have survived this long if these values were just words. The management and the employees at Marathon and Prevost make everyday decisions guided by these values. Our relationship benefits from this. We experience it every time we talk to coach owners, or to managers and employees at Marathon.

MB: What do you see as primary prerequisites to be a leader in the bus conversion industry?

GB: Have a top-quality product and outstanding customer service support. Have a strong technical

team to be able to take advantage of new technologies and be responsive to customers' comments. Walk the Talk!

MB: What are your thoughts about the bus conversion lifestyle?

GB: It is amazing! Having been part of Prevost for so many years, I thought I knew what it was all about, but until we went to a rally and spent a few days with coach owners, we didn't really know what it meant...the camaraderie, family feeling, the different cultures encountered and first-class people. And this is only one aspect of it. The best way to understand is to try it!

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MB: Is there anything you would like Marathon coach owners to know about Prevost Car?

GB: We are proud of the heritage left by strong builders such as Tom Harbison, Bill Campbell and Andre Normand, and we will always go the extra mile. These men are sources of inspiration for us. We plan to continue what they have started and we will try to further enhance "The Prevost Experience." Our innovations will, in future years, be better reflected in our products and

services to the benefit of all. We, the 1300 employees of Prevost Car, are very grateful for your business and partnership, and we thank you.

MB: Would you make some comments about Marathon Coach and its bus conversions?

GB: I should have read this question before starting...I am sure you can pick several statements from the prior questions... Marathon is a great partner!

MB: And finally, tell me about your family, interests, and hobbies.

GB: I am married, and have 2 kids: a son, Alexander, who is 12 years old; and a daughter, Elise, who is 14. My wife, Marlene, is a veterinarian and has her own small animal clinic...and of course, we have a small dog, 3 birds, and several fish. A few years ago we had two cats and turtles on top of this—we are running low right now. We have a 140-acre tree farm close to where my parents were raised. We regularly go hiking around it and take care of the wild deer and birds during winter.

Marathon Coach thanks Gaétan and Prevost Car for their tremendous support over the years. It has been a great partnership and we are confident a strong relationship will continue into the future. To contact Gaétan, or learn more about Prevost Car, please visit www.prevostcar.com. •