

Darienite

News for Darien

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Genesee & Wyoming Inc. — A \$5B Railroad Conglomerate with HQ in Darien: Cameron on Transportation

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You might not realize it, but Connecticut is home to the world headquarters of a \$5 billion international railroad company and you'll never be able to ride on its trains.

In a small office building across from the Darien railroad station sits the offices of Genesee & Wyoming Inc., a “short line” and regional freight railroad conglomerate. The railroad, founded in 1899, still hauls salt on its original 14-mile track in upstate New York. G&W owns 120 railroads on three continents, serving 3,000 customers with more than 16,000 miles of track.

A “short-line” railroad, as its name implies, only operates over short distances, sometimes thought of as rail

freight's first and last mile.

They pick up boxcars and tankers at factories and plants and carry them to junction points where they hand them off to the major railroads, which carry them long distance to their ultimate destination, a journey often completed by another short-line railroad.

In the U.S., G&W's railroads are as short as a single mile and as long as 739 miles. The company operates 1,300 locomotives and 30,000 railcars. But they carry only freight, not passengers.

Since the trains only travel short distances, the company is not looking for speed as much as customer service. Moving along at 15 mph saves a lot on track maintenance.

How does G&W's sales team sell companies on shipping by rail instead of truck? Fuel costs. Trains are four times more energy efficient, a crucial consideration when you're hauling tons of stone, coal or wheat instead of Amazon boxes filled with packing peanuts.

G&W consistently receives higher scores from shippers than trucking in customer satisfaction surveys.

The G&W's most local affiliate, the Providence & Worcester, runs a train on Metro-North tracks each night, hauling crushed rock from Connecticut quarries to Queens, N.Y. I can hear the train from my home, usually just before midnight, as its locomotives rumble through town sounding nothing like Metro-North or Amtrak.

That's about the only freight train left on the New Haven line. But that's another story.

The G&W owns some much larger railroads overseas that are also only dedicated to freight. The company runs trains, container terminals and freight yards in the UK, Germany, Poland, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Down under in Australia, the G&W owns 51 percent of a huge freight operation serving the coal, iron ore and manganese mines and hauling intermodal containers through the desert-like interior.

How does a tiny, 20-person office in Darien oversee such a massive railroad network around the planet? It doesn't. Each of G&W's nine operating regions is locally managed with capital allocated from headquarters. Keeping the decision-making close to the customers, not being second-guessed from thousands of miles away, has been the key to G&W's success.

But one thing that all of G&W's railroads do share in common is the color scheme of their logos, originally designed by Milton Glaser. Every G&W railroad's logo is orange and black. Not just any orange, but Princeton orange, harkening back to its former chairman's alma mater.

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