

Targeting motorhomes: the birth of **RVdoors**



Metallarte has launched the brand name **RVdoors**, and is ready to conquer important market shares in the specific and promising door and hatch segment for motorhomes.

Words Antonio Mazzucchelli



In times of crisis, some businesses are inclined to downsize to the point of practically disappearing, while others prefer to invest in growth, riding the waves on stormy seas with the wind in their sails. What's certain is that Metallarte is not a company that has been overwhelmed by the global economic crisis that has also affected the RV vehicle industry. Quite the contrary, following an expansion trend begun a few years ago, Metallarte has increasingly expanded its market reach. And now it has launched a new brand - **RVdoors**, with the precise aim of

making a secure foray into the market niche of motorhome cabin doors and hatches. A niche that is actually of significant importance, considering that in Europe the motorhome segment is currently recording sales levels that are anything but poor. Even more significant is the fact that Metallarte and the recently founded **RVdoors** are Italian manufacturers, where in Italy the motorhome sector has enjoyed a veritable reawakening after 2010, following a more or less generalized decline that lasted about ten years. Of course, it is well known that German manufacturers have always had

confidence in the motorhome sector, and it is noteworthy that a variety of Italian brands have recently thrown themselves into the fray, obtaining significant results. And they're still investing in the future. Perhaps the secret lies in expanding towards base level potential buyers: no longer catering exclusively to high-end motorhomes, but also the everyman's motorhome (or just about), currently mainly in the 60,000/70,000 euro range. Sure, Metallarte had already demonstrated some interest in motorhome cabin doors, and we'd written up about it in **Aboutcamp BtoB**.





However, the company has now moved from good intentions to concrete action, as Metallarte has seized on the opportunity to take over the related business unit from Gi Emme Evo.

"We're already in operation, as we've started up on the production of motorhome doors for the 2016 season," states Checcucci, CEO of Metallarte and RVDoors, "thanks to the fact that as a company our machinery and staff were aptly up to the challenge. Gi Emme Evo was in trouble, since it lacked someone who could follow up closely on its operations, mapping out a route, and it lacked a skilled sales department and, not least, it lacked the money to make necessary investments. But there were also a lot of positives: first and foremost, it had a skilled labour force, with some resources boasting up to twenty years' experience in the sector. And they already had a product, a door for motorhomes developed for Giottiline and already tested and proven, therefore potentially ready to be put in production."

The move from Gi Emme Evo to RVDoors, which has begun but is not yet completed, has entailed an overall restructuring of production. Firstly, the logic of spot interventions for small commissions of ten to fifteen pieces has been dismissed, switching over to an industrial and serial production, possibly working solely with important customers and large numbers. Costs have also been optimized, beginning with purchasing costs, based on the many years of experience at Metallarte. Not too many significant corrective measures were required on the product per se, barring changes made relating to industrialization in view of production increases. RVDoors is therefore one of only a handful of businesses on the European market today that have specialized in motorhome cabin doors. A company that can move quickly and also be competitive in terms of spare parts, thanks to the fact that many components, especially essential parts, are manufactured in-house, without having to rely on outsourcers.

"We surely want to increase our product range," adds Michele Checcucci, "but at the same time we also want to focus quite a lot on quality, providing quality that is closely related to increased production. The door on a motorhome cabin is a complex element, and in some respects even more complex than the access door to the living area. There are a variety of reasons for this, not least of which is

the fact that it always includes a sliding electrified glass partition. Not to mention that it's an industrialized product, but with a high degree of customization."

This is a key issue, which requires that the company be capable of moving expertly between product standardization, necessary in maintaining low cost levels, and customizations for specific requests from each customer, an essential condition in differentiating doors according to the various brands and individual models. A difficult task, to be sure, but not one which Michele Checcucci is afraid to take on: "I can count on the skills of expert workers and machinery that allow for a variety of work processes within the company, and that's why doors manufactured by RVDoors,

while displaying a common frame, will also be differentiated based on many other elements: they may be wider or narrower, lined in aluminium or fiberglass, with thermoformed interior trimmings in various shapes, equipped with basic or luxury handles, offering normal or burnished glass, and so on."

All the preconditions are therefore in place for a positive business development. But it's not just about hypothetical projects, since RVDoors already has a steady stream of orders lined up for the 2016 season: its partnership with the Italian division of the Trigano group is already under way, and will be formalized shortly in the supply of cabin doors for McLouis, Elnagh, CI and Roller Team motorhomes, as well as other brands.

Company Profile

RV-Doors is a brand owned by Metallarte, established with the precise intention of extending the Tuscan based company's scope. Technically speaking, it has created a subsidiary business unit for Gi Emme Evo, specializing in doors and hatches on motorhome cabins. The production site is still the original site in Mirano, Venice, with a covered surface area of 1500 square meters, enclosing its production processes, storage, technical and administrative offices, and includes an open surface area of around 2500 sq m. Metallarte began its operations in 1996, the year in which the company started up its growth phase in the caravanning sector, which was further boosted by the acquisition of the brand by Michele Checcucci in 2003. The new administrator's business strategy was based on an in-depth knowledge of both the market and the needs of the OEM sector. The new management's strengths lay in its utmost flexibility and quick response times to customers' needs, through fast decision-making processes and operations focusing on efficiency, without ever neglecting quality. With complete doors, hatches and other products for the OEM market, today Metallarte supplies Europe's largest recreational vehicle manufacturers: a variety of brands from the groups Trigano, Sea and Rapido, as well as the Slovenian Adria, the British Auto Trail, and most major Italian brand names, including Laika. The long list is supplemented by several RV builders in Australia and New Zealand, and the company has made a recent incursion into the North American market. In 2005 Metallarte was awarded UNI EN ISO 9001:2000 certification (so-called Vision 2000 certification) which guarantees the quality of production processes while paying greater attention to efficiency/effectiveness specifications, and conducting customer satisfaction surveys. The company's production site has its roof entirely covered in solar panels, thus ensuring energy independence, and employs around thirty people. Metallarte adopts FIPFG technology (formed-in-place foam gasket), an innovative system for creating gaskets applied to doors, openings and hatches on recreational vehicles and caravans.



Michele Checcucci