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## Going concern



**Steve Bienkowski, CA**  
COO, The Kitchener Rangers

**Company profile:** The Kitchener Rangers scored a hat trick in 2008: the team won its fourth Ontario Hockey League championship, set a franchise best in wins (53), and earned a surplus of \$1 million. While it fell just short of winning the Canadian Hockey League Memorial Cup — it lost in the finals to the Spokane Chiefs — the nonprofit corporation still managed revenue of almost \$6 million, a \$1.5-million jump from the previous year. It also spent almost \$250,000 on various charitable and community endeavours — all without a sharp increase in attendance. “But that’s only because we can’t fit any more people in the building,” says COO Steve Bienkowski of the Rangers’ 57-year-old home, the Aud.

**Hot factor:** The team is entering its 46th season (and 13th consecutive year in the black) as one of the league’s attendance leaders. While the majority of OHL teams average about 3,000 fans per game, the Rangers routinely attract 6,000 to every home game. Its grip on the community is also represented in swag sales: its retail arm sold more than \$500,000 of Rangers merchandise last season.

**Cool projects:** With season-ticket renewals near 100% — the waiting list alone is approaching 1,000 — a new and bigger arena is the next logical phase of development. While there are still no blueprints, the team’s success will help it finance a new multipurpose facility.

**In his own words:** “While winning is still crucial to our success, we can’t also forget that we’re in the entertainment business, both on and off the ice. We’ve created a culture that’s centred around our community, where people will come every Friday night and see the same people sitting next to them. They like the social aspect of it; it’s a common bond they can share.”

*John Shoesmith*