Accelerating in three years with Enterprise Corps

Daniel Farias was looking for a profitable exit strategy for his startup and he found it through Enterprise Corps

When he went public in June 2025, Daniel Farias received all sorts of congratulatory comments on LinkedIn for transitioning his company, Hiltec USA, and its technologies to SENCO Industrial Tools. The deal turned out to be more lucrative than he had imagined, two-and-a-half times his original asking price. According to Farias, that is due, in part, to the coaching and instruction he received from Enterprise Corps.

In 2004, Farias came to Indiana from Brazil to be with family. He met his wife and stayed. His twin boys were born here and so was his company, Hiltec USA, an integrator of robotics, software and custom machinery for manufacturing.

“My endgame was to look for items that we could make into products,” Farias says.

In 2018 and 2019, he researched areas prone to have automation, and in July 2022, Hiltec USA was born. He started Hiltec USA alone with $13,000 and three years later, the business is worth millions. It grew enough to employ nine people and he says his software increased the manufacturing productivity of his clients by 60%.

Farias had his eyes on the RV industry in Elkhart. He saw it as an industry that is not highly regulated, one where there is a lot of manual labor. He envisioned Hiltec USA helping with production and decreasing the need for intense manual labor, not necessarily replacing workers. The goal was to increase both productivity and employment.

“It’s not about displacing people, it’s about outcomes,” Farias explains.

He would approach prospective customers with the following question: “Could you sell more product?”

If they thought they could, he would explain how robotics could help. He described the software as lean, with only a few buttons to touch, and not intimidating. However, according to Farias, the RV industry was unwilling to change its processes. He did not see how he could break into that market, so he pressed on.

Farias states, “If you do not have a 574 area code in Elkhart, you are seen as a foreigner.”

Farias found a fit in Goshen, a place where custom-built homes are manufactured, and again, manual labor is intense. Farias could see how his software and robots could go right to work customizing walls, some measuring eight to nine feet, and how the work could be done indoors and off-site. Farias says with automation, there is no waste, reducing costs and increasing production. Instead of six to eight people cutting lumber and risking injury, a robot with someone at the controls takes care of the heavy lifting. The people are then free to work in other areas that are less taxing, and that can lead to less turnover. The lumber fits as it should

and the weather is not a factor.

More than just a fit, Farias found his exit strategy by doing business with the manufacturer of modular homes. His Goshen customer insisted on using nails and staples from a company in Cincinnati, Ohio. That company, SENCO Industrial Tools, turned out to be interested in Hiltec USA. Farias was able to show SENCO how using his software could make the company more productive, competitive and relevant.

Farias says he originally thought he would sell the product, not the company, but the more he got to know the people at SENCO and their mission, the more he realized the benefit of transferring the technology and working under one umbrella. He received coaching and support through Enterprise Corps. He estimates that with the transition, he will be able to triple his annual sales.

Farias discovered Enterprise Corps when he showed up to an Indy Chamber event uninvited. They had a pitch competition going on and he did not have a pitch, but he decided to participate anyway. Farias leaned on the knowledge he had been building.

"I talked to them about labor, house market and how meaningful automation could impact the industry," Farias says. He ended up taking home third place.

But for Farias, the even bigger prize was the chance to connect with other entrepreneurs and the IU Kelley School of Business.

It was at that event in April 2024 that he became a member of the Indy Chamber and he found out about Enterprise Corps. He learned of privileged access to resources from the IU Kelley School of Business. He signed up for the courses and met Professor Phil Powell.

"I was at a point in my business I was about to deliver the system. Phil was instrumental."

"I had one of those 6 a.m. calls with Phil. He was on his way to Bloomington and I was on my way to Elkhart. He guided me on what the company is essentially worth," Farias explains.

Farias learned through Enterprise Corps that instead of getting one lump sum for the transfer of Hiltec USA's technology to SENCO, he could get the price to go up by receiving a percentage of every unit of software sold.

Farias says he does not know how to say "thank you" enough to Powell and the other professors, but he does offer this advice for other entrepreneurs.

"Be open-minded. Be humble. You don't know everything."

Farias says the connections he made through Enterprise Corps, like the legal support he received while he was in negotiations, strengthened his position as a small business owner.

Beyond the instruction and coaching, Farias found the exchange between business owners in the cohort valuable. He says he had one company produce signs for Hiltec USA and he helped another participant with grant writing. He would like to see participants given more time to interact during classes.

Farias will now be Director of Robotics & Software Development for SENCO. "It was a long ride in some ways, but in some ways, it was just yesterday," he says. He is no longer a small business owner making every decision. He can now focus on decisions specific to his manufacturing automation solution in a large company, allowing him more valuable time with his family. ■

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