# CANADEXPORT supplement

# GOING GLOBAL Women Entrepreneurs in International Markets



**SEPTEMBER** 







s you can see from the incredibly varied examples of the women profiled within, women-Lowned firms are a tremendous entrepreneurial force in the Canadian economy. Over the past 20 years, Canada has seen a 200% increase in the number of such firms, with the result that, by 2001, nearly half (47%) of all small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Canada had at least one female owner. Majority women-owned SMEs produced commercial revenues of \$72 billion in 2000.

However, despite such impressive statistics of achievement by women-owned firms, roughly half the number of SMEs primarily owned by women - compared to those primarily owned by men - reported exporting in 2001 (6.9% versus 13.4%). Women-owned firms were less likely to export regardless of economic sector, size of firm, growth orientation or access to capital.

I therefore encourage women entrepreneurs to take advantage of the many resources that International Trade Canada (ITCan) and its partners in Team Canada Inc have to offer, and which are highlighted in this supplement. A wealth of information about programs and services is available to help you realize the benefits of international trade, such as a trade commissioner in the ITCan regional office in each province who is committed to helping women entrepreneurs; Export Development Canada's special team to assist women entrepreneurs; and the Business Development Bank of Canada's \$25 million fund for women entrepreneurs.

International Trade Canada's team of over 900 trade commissioners is ready to help you take on the world. Working together, we look forward to celebrating your company's success next year.



**James Scott Peterson** Minister of International Trade





Going Global: Women Entrepreneurs in International Markets

# REGIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS OFFER EXPORTING SUPPORT

Whether you need help to get started on your exporting path or to expand your international growth, tap into these regional assistance programs, some even specifically designed for women.

# WESTERN ECONOMIC **DIVERSIFICATION CANADA WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE (WEI)**

WHAT IT IS: Business information and services specifically tailored to the needs of women in Western provinces and delivered through non-profit groups - the Women's Enterprise Society of B.C., Alberta Women Entrepreneurs Association, Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan Inc. and Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba (see page 11). They offer access to a loan fund and advisory services, pathfinding to existing services plus education and training, networking and mentoring. WEI offices are located in Kelowna, Calgary, Saskatoon and Winnipeg, with satellite offices in Vancouver, Edmonton, and Regina.

**EXPORTING SUPPORT:** Coaching and providing referrals about training resources, assistance with export plans and supporting trade-related organizations in order to help women expand their businesses globally.

#### **INFORMATION:**

WD Toll-Free Number (accessible in Western Canada only) 1-888-338-WEST (9378)

WEB: www.wd.gc.ca

CONTACT: Sharon Jackson, Corporate Policy & Planning Officer Western Economic Diversification Canada

Tel: (780) 495-3182; e-mail: sharon.jackson@wd.gc.ca

# **NETWORK FOR WOMEN** ENTREPRENEURS (NWE) ONTARIO

WHAT IT IS: Launched in the spring of 2005 as a result of a recommendation from the Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs and administered by the Canada-Ontario Business Service Centre, NWE provides women entrepreneurs in the province with information on programs and services to start and grow their business as well as guidance in locating key community support services. NWE will work with existing organizations to tailor services where appropriate, organize events geared to women entrepreneurs and expand the network throughout Ontario.

EXPORTING SUPPORT: Through its web portal and tollfree line, NWE provides access to key business information, business counselling and community outreach services, expert consultants and trade-related organizations throughout Ontario.

#### INFORMATION:

Toll Free: 1-888-300-9308

WEB: www.cbsc.org/ontario/nwe E-mail: NWE-RFE@cbsc.ic.gc.ca

**CONTACT:** Catherine Goguen, Senior Coordinator

Women's Program, Canada-Ontario Business Service Centre

# **FEDNOR**

WHAT IT IS: An initiative to address the economic development needs of Northern Ontario. Working with numerous partners, and through its programs and services, FedNor helps fund community projects as well as other initiatives designed to improve the economic and social well-being of the North as a whole.

**EXPORTING SUPPORT:** Provides SMEs with information and services to develop and expand their international markets through its International Business Centre (IBC). Working with International Trade Canada and other government export agencies, the centre helps guide SMEs to become successful exporters by improving access to trade and export-related information and services through conferences, training and trade missions.

# **INFORMATION:**

Toll Free: 1-877-333-6673 WEB: www.fednor.ic.gc.ca

**CONTACT:** Pam McRae, Initiatives Officer,

FedNor International Business Centre

E-mail: mcrae.pam@ic.gc.ca

# ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES **AGENCY WOMEN IN BUSINESS** INITIATIVE (WBI)

WHAT IT IS: An initiative to strengthen the management capabilities and business development skills of women entrepreneurs, to provide them with improved access to capital and business support services for business start-up and growth, and to increase the number of women business owners selling in international markets and in knowledge-based industries.

**EXPORTING SUPPORT:** WBI's Exposure to Exporting and Innovation Program focuses on growth strategies for established women-owned businesses. It targets women-owned firms for participation in trade missions and helps women entrepreneurs access trade training and exporting seminars and pre-exporter orientation training.

#### INFORMATION

ACOA New Brunswick 1-800-561-4030 ACOA Newfoundland and Labrador 1-800-668-1010

ACOA Nova Scotia 1-800-565-1228

ACOA Prince Edward Island 1-800-871-2596

Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation 1-800-705-3926

WEB: www.acoaapeca.gc.ca/e/business/ entrepreneurship/wbi/wbi.shtml

CONTACT: Rose-Marie LeBlanc, Manager,

Women in Business Initiative

Tel: (506) 851-2095; e-mail: rose-marie.leblanc@acoa-apeca.gc.ca

# INTERNATIONAL TRADE CANADA REGIONAL OFFICES

If you are thinking today's global economy looks inviting, your local International Trade Regional Office (RO) can help. In partnership with members of the Regional Trade Network, the RO can help direct you to the existing products and services that relate to your particular exporting needs. They work with a range of other partners making up Team Canada Inc, which is a network of government export service providers helping Canadian business succeed in world markets. Clients achieve maximum benefit by receiving the right kinds of services, quickly and efficiently.

Located in every province, the RO provides a full range of trade development services and assistance to Canadian small and mediumsized enterprises, including: one-on-one export help to implement your export strategy; up to date foreign market and industry information; advice on how to access export financing or funding programs in your province or territory; and information on trade fairs, missions and events including seminars to help you learn about business environments and opportunities abroad.

Most importantly, each RO has a trade commissioner who is your key contact, and will help you to navigate your way through the variety of programs and services available. For more information, please call the toll-free Export Information Service at 1-888-811-1119, log onto www.infoexport.gc.ca, or contact your province's RO at one of the addresses below.

#### **VANCOUVER**

Tel: (604) 666-0434 Fax: (604) 666-0954

E-Mail: itc-vancouver@ic.gc.ca

# **EDMONTON**

Tel: (780) 495-2944 Fax: (780) 495-4507

E-Mail: itc-edmonton@ic.gc.ca

# SASKATOON

Tel: (306) 975-5315 Fax: (306) 975-5334

E-Mail: itc-saskatoon@ic.gc.ca

## WINNIPEG

Tel: (204) 983-5851 Fax: (204) 983-3182

E-Mail: itc-winnipeg@ic.gc.ca

# TORONTO

Tel: (416) 973-5053 Fax: (416) 973-8161 E-Mail: itc-toronto@ic.gc.ca

# MONTREAL

Tel: (514) 283-6328 Fax: (514) 283-8794 E-Mail: itc-montreal@ic.gc.ca

#### MONCTON

Tel: (506) 851-6452 Fax: (506) 851-6429

E-Mail: itc-moncton@ic.gc.ca

# HALIFAX

Tel: (902) 426-7540 Fax: (902) 426-5218 E-Mail: itc-halifax@ic.gc.ca

#### **CHARLOTTETOWN**

Tel: (902) 566-7382 Fax: (902) 566-6859

E-Mail:

itc-charlottetown@ic.gc.ca

# ST. JOHN'S

Tel: (709) 772-5511 Fax: (709) 772-5093

E-Mail: itc-st.johns@ic.gc.ca

Continued from page 2

# WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURIAL CENTER OF QUEBEC (WECQ)

WHAT IT IS: Offers women entrepreneurs a range of services, including diagnosis of entrepreneurial needs and channelling to appropriate advice and services, access to information on programs and services, skills upgrading, customized consultation and coaching and mentoring, and networking activities. A bilingual web portal is also in the works. WECQ was launched early in 2005 in response to a recommendation from the Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs.

**EXPORTING SUPPORT:** Referrals, training, mentoring and coaching programs for both start-ups and growing womenowned businesses.

# INFORMATION:

Toll Free: 1-800-332-2683

WEB: www.rfaq.ca

**CONTACT:** Nicole Beaudoin, Chair Tel: (514) 521-2441; e:mail: info@rfaq.ca

# CANADA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR QUEBEC REGIONS (CED-DEC)

WHAT IT IS: A network of 14 business offices across Quebec that works to promote economic development in the province, focusing on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The agency offers financial assistance and non-financial services.

**EXPORTING SUPPORT:** IDEA-SME is a financial assistance program to help SMEs become more competitive globally. Eligible activities include: consultant studies to develop a marketing strategy, market analysis, implementation of a marketing strategy, including work to comply with standards for government contracting and international markets and form strategic alliances, and support activities for new exporters.

# **INFORMATION**

Tel: 1-800-322-4636 or (514) 283-6412

WEB: www.dec-ced.gc.ca

**CONTACT:** Neila Ghribi, Advisor

Tel: (514) 496-8789; e-mail: neila.ghribi@dec-ced.gc.ca

"IF you don't want to make any mistakes, be sure you are export ready."

# STÉPHANIE BEAUDOIN

# STÉPHANIE BEAUDOIN, Vice-President & Associate

LA FACE CACHÉE DE LA POMME INC. Hemmingford, Québec Tel: (450) 247-2899 Fax: (450) 247-2690

E-mail: sbeaudoin@appleicewine.com Web site: www.appleicewine.com Year Established: 2000 Employees: 11 Years Exporting: 5 Exports Sales: 20% Export Market: North America, Asia and Europe

Business Description: From a fruit, said to be as old as mankind, La Face Cachée de la Pomme (hidden side of the apple) introduced apple ice wine to the Quebec market, pioneering production techniques in the industry. This award-winning golden beverage is sold in Quebec and abroad as an exclusive dessert wine brand, found in the finest cellars and food stores. The company produces two types of ice cider, Neige (Snow), and the more distinguished Frimas (Frost).

Motion picture director **Stéphanie Beaudoin**, known for her movie about the life of French actress Sarah Bernhardt, met now-husband François Pouliot, a film and video producer, in 1998. François had contributed to the development of ice cider, making it at an old apple orchard he bought. In 2000, this weekend hobby became a full-time business venture, with Stéphanie and François at the helm. "Ice cider was unknown in the world, but we were convinced of its potential," explains Stéphanie.

At first, Neige and Frimas were sold in the province through SAQ (Quebec's liquor control agency) as well as directly to restaurant owners and on the property. Soon Stéphanie's main focus shifted to communications and the export side of the business.

# **EXPORTING CRUCIAL**

Both Stéphanie and François felt that exporting was imperative. They wanted to promote Quebec's unique culture. "We think it's important to spread the province's image around the world, and Neige and Frimas bottle the stuff of dreams. They are the fruit of our very best, the expression of our thirst for taste and sophistication," Stéphanie says. Secondly, "we wanted to grow." Lastly, it seemed wise "not to put all our eggs in one basket."

France was the first market they explored. They eventually cracked new ones after Stéphanie attended various fairs and trade shows where she met potential importers. The U.S., courted for quite some time, is La Face Cachée de la Pomme's largest export market. "This was not easy because each state has its own rules for selling alcohol and American legislation doesn't allow us to specify the year of production on the bottle's label," explains Stéphanie.



# **RESOURCES ACCESSED**

The company is registered with the federal government's Virtual Trade Commissioner, which Stéphanie says is a great help. "I receive e-mail information about events across the globe and the Trade Commissioner Service has also supplied me with market studies," she notes. She has also accessed support from the Quebec Agri-Food Export Club through two different programs financed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Today, the entrepreneurial owners of La Face Cachée de la Pomme have several avenues for expansion in mind. They want to secure their current export markets and open others, with a goal of increasing their export sales to 50%. In addition, they just introduced a new product named "Neige Eternelle" (Eternal Snow), produced from the juices extracted from apples kept in oak barrels to age like wine.

# Lessons Learned

# FRUITS OF EXPERIENCE

Based on her lessons learned while developing export markets, Stéphanie Beaudoin has devised three "ground rules" for export success:

- **Scout abroad.** Participation in fairs, trade shows and other promotional events has proved invaluable for Stéphanie. "These types of events have allowed us to meet and select the importers. We do not want them to be too small sized, nor too general, nor too big. We want to ensure that the team we work with takes great care of our niche products."
- Think twice. "If you don't want to make mistakes, be sure you are export ready. Three years ago, for instance, we did not want to export to Japan. Although the quality of our packaging has always met the high standards there, we would not have been able to keep up with the demand. Now we have the production capacity, and this year Neige was even introduced at Expo 2005 in Aichi, Japan."
- Specify payment conditions. "One small example determine if you will be paid in Canadian or American dollars or in euros in order to avoid any misunderstandings."

"No matter what country you're in, it's all the same people with needs trying to **Find solutions.**"

# DR. NANCY MATHIS

DR. NANCY MATHIS, President & CEO MATHIS INSTRUMENTS LTD. Fredericton, New Brunswick Tel: (506) 457-1515/1-877-827-7623 Fax: (506) 462-7210 E-mail: info@mathisinstruments.com Web site: www.mathisinstruments.com

Year Established: 1995 Employees: 22 Years Exporting: 10 Exports Sales: 90% Export Market: U.S.. Europe, Brazil, Taiwan, China, Australia, Iran, Turkey, Korea

Business Description: Mathis Instruments provides heat sensor solutions for R&D, manufacturing and quality control environments, offering the latest in rapid, non-destructive thermal analysis instruments. The purpose of the technology is to measure the ability of a material to transfer heat - thermal effusivity. It is used by large pharmaceutical clients to ensure that drugs manufactured from powders are uniform and at the proper level of moisture and lubrication. Other customers include manufacturers of electronic materials. In 1999, Mathis won the international R&D 100 Award, a coveted innovation award that has also recognized Polaroid film, anti-lock brakes and the ATM.

female entrepreneur, exporter and engineer, Nancy Mathis is Attended to being non-traditional across the board. And in her very specialized industry, she has found that's a benefit. With so few women doing what she does, she and her company stand out. "When you're exporting, you are selling, when you're selling, you're solving problems and when you're solving problems, you're listening," she observes. "And I think women make phenomenal listeners, coming up with solutions that really impact a customer."

# BREAKTHROUGH RESEARCH

With a Ph.D. in chemical engineering and a rare talent for making the complex simple, Nancy has been developing solutions since her school days. The sensor technology at the root of Mathis' products is the result of her Ph.D. research. When she and her mechanical engineer husband, Chris, launched Mathis in 1995, after she was encouraged to commercialize her research, she initially focused on R&D and also taught at the University of New Brunswick, which incubated the new company. In 2000, she became President and CEO. They entered the export game very quickly when their first U.S. distributor announced their product offering to its entire 50-country channel.

With the majority of pharmaceutical manufacturing "a stone's throw away" along the U.S. eastern seaboard, Mathis initially concentrated there. Nancy is currently developing a strategy for Europe, the second largest pharmaceutical market, and is sourcing a distributor in the U.K. and Ireland.

Mathis uses a mix of its own direct sales team and a network of partners and distributors on the thermal side of the business, selling its instrumentation as far afield as Korea, China and even Iran. "Working through partners has been successful for us," maintains Nancy.



# CERTIFICATION A CHALLENGE

Certification, which is different in every country, has proven to be the greatest export challenge for Mathis. "You must have your standardization in advance of selling into a country and sometimes, even with the best market intelligence, it's difficult to determine if the market will bear out the investment you make."

Despite these complexities, Nancy can't imagine not exporting. Exporting gives you access to a massive market, and there are no insurmountable barriers, she says. "No matter what country you're in, it's all the same. You can do business in any language across any kind of food over the dinner table. Whether it's green beer on St. Patrick's Day in Toronto or sake in Japan, it's the same process."

#### Lessons Learned

# **CRACKING INTO NEW MARKETS**

Winner of Canada's top innovation honour in 2004 – the Manning Award for Innovation – Nancy Mathis continues to break new ground worldwide in the field of sensor technology advancement. She shares these success factors for global expansion:

- Use outside resources. Mathis has tapped into loans, grants and networking introductions from various government agencies. "Industry Canada has been a good resource for us." Whether it's co-development or project money, the National Research Council and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency have also been supportive since the beginning. "They're happy to help both new and established companies."
- Determine the best representation. Mathis generally enters a new market using a distributor and, once the demand warrants it, will go direct and hire people.
- **Be** prepared to travel. "Initially, I spent 60% of my time travelling. Once you are more established, you can cut back."
- Leverage technology to communicate. "In our business, a potential customer can get upto-speed through our web information, webinars and interactive teleconferencing. If you utilize this technology, it doesn't matter whether you're selling to California or to countries abroad."

"IF you come to the table prepared, your exporting relationship will begin."

# SONJA PEROVIC

SONJA PEROVIC, President LOOPMEDIA INC. Toronto, Ontario Tel: (416) 595-6496 Fax: (416) 595-0306

E-mail: sonja@loopmedia.com Web site: www.loopmedia.com

Business Description: Loopmedia provides animation design and branding solutions - from concept through to project management - for film, television, advertising and new media industries. Celebrating its 10th year, Loopmedia has built a solid reputation through award-winning designs and long-term relationships with clients including media giants and leading advertisers. The firm also gives back to the community by raising awareness for issues like AIDS prevention and ovarian cancer.

For Sonja Perovic, building a successful export business is all about developing relations. all about developing relationships. That means plenty of networking, particularly at industry events. "You never know where your next piece of business will come from," she says, recalling that she met her biggest client to date at a New York conference, after she complimented the woman on a particularly beautiful shirt. "Had I not attended that conference and mentioned that shirt, I wouldn't have expanded my business by 25%!" she laughs.

"Design drives branding, and good design transcends borders," explains Sonja. "We knew that to compete effectively we needed to expand our efforts to other markets." Loopmedia initially targeted large New York and Chicago ad agencies, drawing upon Canada's Trade Commissioner Service to explore ideas and to compile lists of prospects. Loopmedia's sales team then systematically broke down the lists and solicited one-on-one meetings by making phone calls and attending conferences. This strategy has been so successful that Loopmedia has grown its U.S. exports to almost half of its business in three short years.

# PREFERS DIRECT SALES

Sonja has preferred to break into the U.S. using her own sales team, a team that clearly understands Loopmedia's services and brand. "With the Internet and the development of ftp sites, it doesn't really matter where you are physically located."

As a matter of fact, Loopmedia's website has proven to be "an amazing tool in generating new business," Sonja notes. "I think that a company without a web site is really losing out. It legitimizes you, gives prospective clients easy access to see what you do and serves as a conversation starter in the sales process."



# CHINA ON THE HORIZON

While Loopmedia's primary focus remains North Amerca, Sonja has her sights set on China and is approaching it in the same methodical way as she did the U.S. - starting with solid research. That means attending seminars on doing business there, seeking the advice of trade commissioners, devising a market entry strategy and sourcing a potential partner with local experience.

"China is a huge market, so to ignore it would be foolish," insists Sonja. "We're gearing up for it, but we have to find the right niche before jumping in." She has some novel ideas... "but I'm still doing my homework!"

#### Lessons Learned

# DOING BUSINESS IN THE U.S.

Although Canada and the U.S. share a common language and border, there are subtle cultural differences that can affect your success in doing business there, particularly if you are a service-based business. Sonja Perovic shares these insights and tips:

- **Do your research**. Look at how you can add value to the revenue stream of a potential U.S. client and how you can be a partner rather than a supplier and cost centre. "That strategy has worked for us because we become part of the team, which builds loyalty and relationships."
- Target properly. "Take your time. Target one customer at a time when you're first starting out, being very clear on the outcome you want, and this will lead to other things. If you come to the table prepared, your exporting relationship will begin."
- **Be** American-ready. Ensure you can offer quality and the ability to deal with distances and tight deadlines. "Clients are looking for quality and service. You have to deliver on both."
- Always deal in U.S. currency. "We never quote in Canadian dollars and we position ourselves in the mid to high price range because Americans look for quality, not bargains."
- Join associations. A member of the Organization of Women in International Trade (www.owit-toronto.ca), Sonja finds that such groups help in raising her understanding of the nuances of doing business with our U.S. neighbours. "Trade associations can be invaluable sources of information."

"Plot your moves carefully and take calculated risk."

# LESLEY RUST

**LESLEY RUST, President** PROPARMS LTD. Carignan, Quebec Tel: (450) 658-5207 Fax: (450) 447-2727

E-mail: lesley@proparms.com Web site: www.proparms.com

Year Established: 1973 Employees: 26 Years Exporting: 20+ Exports Sales: 90% Export Market: 70 countries. including Asia, Europe, the Middle East and the U.S.

Business Description: A world leader in explosives ordnance disposal (EOD) technology, Proparms designs and manufactures anti-terrorist equipment for police and military clients to use in soft-package bomb disposal. Its range of water disrupters, which fire a jet of water to disarm explosives, can be used on land and underwater, mounted on robots and for some kinds of anti-personnel mines. Its latest product, developed with a retired New York City Bomb Squad member, is the Remote Entry Device (RED) designed to gain access into the trunks of suspicious vehicles and the cargo area of vans and trucks.

The daughter and sister of police officers, **Lesley Rust** was born in the U.K. but spent her early career in the theatre in Montreal, both as a company manager and props manager. Here she met her future husband – Josef Elsener – a renowned armourer with Sureté du Québec, the province's police force. He was an expert witness in weaponry-related trials whose family invented the Swiss Army Knife.

Although maintaining "I knew nothing about guns," Lesley identified a niche and, along with Josef, initially founded Proparms in 1973 as a supplier of special effects and specialized props, including weaponry, to the Canadian film industry. It moved into soft package bomb disposal when approached by Sureté du Québec, which was searching for a reliable bomb disrupter.

Lesley launched the new company, spearheading the marketing, with Josef focusing on design until a serious illness and his eventual death in 2002 left her alone at the helm. Undaunted, she has more than doubled her employee size since then and actively pursued partnerships.

# WORLD LEADER

Proparms is only one of a handful of companies worldwide specializing in EOD disrupter technology. What sets it apart is its commitment to quality (it is ISO certified) and to safety. "And as a small company in a world where Canada is a flea on the side of an elephant, we can be more flexible and conduct R&D and get product to market more quickly."

The road to international growth was a natural one for Proparms. "You cannot survive as a Canadian company in this highly-specialized field by doing business only in North America. You need to think globally." Along the way, she has attended many conferences and trade shows and accessed support from Canadian Embassies and trade commissioners around the world and from the Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP), Idea-SME and the RCMP.



# **GENDER NO BARRIER**

Although she is one of very few women in this industry, Lesley has not found her gender to be a barrier. "The soft sell can be very effective," she maintains, encouraging other women not to be intimidated by male-dominated, technical fields. "Just ask lots of questions." Her motto? "I'm not superior but I'm everyone's equal. If you remember that, the sky's the limit!"

Lesley's best advice to others expanding internationally is to have a good export plan and pursue growth prudently. "Like a good chess player, plot your moves carefully and take calculated risk."

# Lessons Learned

# **SOURCING AGENTS WORLDWIDE**

With the bulk of Proparms sales from exports, it relies heavily on agents around the world to sell its products. Here are Lesley Rust's tips for finding and retaining reliable agents who are not just "super-slick salespeople":

- Use Canada's trade commissioners abroad. "The Canadian Embassy is great. We always keep in contact, and advise them of any problems we have with agents."
- Attend industry events. "By attending conferences for bomb technicians and demonstrating our equipment at trade shows, we've been able to find knowledgeable reps."
- Share agents. Lesley cooperates with related Canadian companies, like Allen Vanguard and Med-Eng. Systems Inc., sharing agents and even marketing together. And finding agents who can represent you in more than one market is helpful and can cut down on your travel costs to train new people.
- **Ensure ongoing communication.** Along with solid training for agents, Proparms publishes a newsletter which keeps its agents abreast of the latest developments.

"We take full advantage of all government programs that help exporters."

# DEBORAH SHEPPARD

**DEBORAH SHEPPARD, President** 

THEDOG8IT! INC.

St. John's. Newfoundland Tel: (709) 368-1988

Fax: (709) 368-4622

E-mail: deb@thedog8it.com Web site: www.thedog8it.com Year Established: 2001 Employees: 7 Years Exporting: 3 Export Sales: 30% Export Market: U.S.

Business Description: thedog8it! produces specialty dog treats using certified organic ingredients, the best quality animal protein and natural spring water from Central Newfoundland – presented in special, beautiful packaging that maintains freshness. Manufactured locally in a 3,200 sq. ft. plant with a warehouse facility in Buffalo, New York, the cookies are available in specialty pet, gift and health food stores across Canada and in the U.S. They are also sold online in the U.S. via amazon.com.

eborah Sheppard combined her passion for baking and all things canine to start her healthy bakery for dogs after her own pets had been poisoned by commercial dog food contaminated with mouldy grain. Her treats proved to be such a hit in the U.S. that she opened a warehouse in Buffalo two years after start-up. Initially she focused on New York and the New England States where she sourced agents after attending the New York Fancy Food Show. It was there that she received her first U.S. order - for \$20,000 from Saks - after meeting one of the store's executives at the show.

# **U.S. EXPANSION**

Deborah's goal is to develop a network of brokers, covering every single state. She is currently targeting the Midwest, starting with the Chicago market, where she has already done considerable research and participated in the Team Atlantic Canada Trade Mission to the Windy City this year.

At first, she was skeptical about using commissioned sales reps, "but I now realize it's a cost of doing business that I have to factor in." She looks for brokers who have compatible and complementary lines.

# PRICING CRITICAL

Savvy about how to price products for the American market, Deborah's advice to others is to "Factor in all the worst-casescenario variables - the Canadian dollar at par, waiting costs at the border, high margins expected by agents and specialty stores." She also recommends getting accounts receivable insurance from Export Development Canada (EDC) to cover any bad debts. "It gives you peace of mind," she emphasizes. "And you can go online and do a credit check on potential customers, which is very convenient and useful."



Deborah will continue to focus her exports on the U.S until she blankets the market. Europe will likely be next. A firm believer in utilizing the various government resources and programs for exporters, Deborah will always tap into them. "I look at the Trade Commissioners as staff I don't have to pay," she explains. "Their mandate is to help me as a Canadian exporter – to assist in supplying market information, resolving border issues and ensuring I'm in compliance with regulations. Anyone who doesn't use the Consulate offices is really overlooking a tremendous opportunity to gather information and have the groundwork done for them!"

# Lessons Learned

# HOW TO MAXIMIZE TRADE MISSION SUCCESS

Deborah Sheppard's first exposure to exporting came when she joined a Team Canada Trade Mission to New York in 2002 and began to build her U.S. business. Through registering on WIN Exports and joining associations, she finds out about relevant missions in a timely fashion. Deborah has this advice for maximizing the benefits of the investment you make in such missions:

- Set a goal. Before going on a Chicago mission, Deborah set a goal to find a reliable agent who calls on the type of accounts she is targeting. Then she utilized the mission "matchmaker" to help her identify candidates, pre-screen them and set up meetings.
- Utilize government resources to do your homework. "It's critical to know your market as well as if you were physically located there." Deborah consults with trade officers in the Canadian consulates about the regions they cover. "These are people on the ground who really know their stuff and can be your eyes and ears." For example, through the Canadian Consulate in Chicago, she accessed "some remarkable reports on the specialty food market in the Midwest" as well as listings of brokers and reps.
- Source potential partners. Find synergies with other participants. Deborah found a noncompetitive food and beverage company from Newfoundland that targets similar accounts. They now swap useful market information, use the same customs broker, share warehouse space in the U.S. and may even combine orders to reduce shipping costs.
- **Ensure thorough follow-up.** "If people you met on the mission requested more information, follow up quickly when you return home." Deborah also adds them to her database to receive news.

"We've tried different entry strategies <mark>in</mark> various countries."

# SANDRA WILSON

SANDRA WILSON, Founder & President ROBEEZ FOOTWEAR LTD. **Burnaby**, British Columbia Tel: (604) 435-9074/1-800-929-2649

Fax: (604) 435-9075

E-mail: swilson@robeez.com Web site: www.robeez.com

Year Established: 1994 Employees: 350 Years Exporting: 8 Exports Sales: 70% Export Market: U.S., U.K., Europe, Australia, Japan

Business Description: Robeez is a world-leading manufacturer of soft soled leather footwear for newborns to four-year-olds. Designed specifically for children's developing feet, the soft sole allows freedom of movement and helps prevent slipping. The company carries over 70 designs and sells its high-quality products worldwide in over 4,500 specialty stores and boutiques as well as online. Robeez has been recognized as one of the fastest growing companies in Canada by PROFIT magazine and also clinched a spot in iParenting magazine for one of the hottest products in 2004.

ownsized from her airline job in 1994, Sandra Wilson decided to start a home-based business, allowing her to spend more time with her 18-month old son, Robert. She handcrafted a pair of brightly coloured leather shoes for him, pleased to discover that the soft soles improved his balance. Sandra named the shoes after her son...and, thus, "Robeez" Footwear was born.

When she took 20 hand-stitched pairs to a regional trade show, the response was overwhelming. In 1995, she hired her first sales rep and moved into commercial space by 1999. Three years into the business, Sandra began exporting to the U.S. The company also has distribution facilities in the U.K. and Australia, and a distributor in Japan.

# **ENTRY STRATEGIES DIFFER**

"We've tried different entry strategies in various countries," explains Sandra. "For example, we initially worked with a distributor in the U.K. but decided to open our own distribution facility in Wales because we wanted to be closer to our customers. In Japan, we have a distributor because there are more complexities around culture, language and leather imports."

As it expands globally, the company's philosophy is to stay customer-focused, a key factor in its North American growth. "We don't want a middle man between Robeez and our customers."

# CHALLENGES WORTH THE EFFORT

That customer-focused strategy has paid off and is being applied to new markets abroad, particularly in Europe and Australia. "As we are just in our infancy there, we are very focused on building those markets and upgrading our web site with multiple languages." Expansion into Europe does not come without its share of complexities. "Every day, we are discovering the challenges of language and currency issues," she reveals. Marketing materials must be translated for some European markets, and Robeez has invested in French-language customer service in its U.K. office and will soon be adding German.



"I think it's all worth the effort," maintains Sandra. "There's a huge market in Europe and high appeal for our products." Just as importantly, she is seeking to spread her export risk and "not have all our eggs in the big United States' basket" with its weakening dollar and border restrictions after 9/11.

#### Lessons Learned

# FROM HER BASEMENT TO THE **GLOBAL MARKET**

Recipient of Rotman's 2004 Canadian Woman Entrepreneur of the Year Export Award, Sandra Wilson is an inspiration to every home-based entrepreneur. She shares her key success factors in making the leap from a basement business to a leading global manufacturer in the children's footwear industry, with an almost cult-like following for her products:

- Tap into government programs. Sandra's interest in exporting was piqued by attending NEBS (New Exporters to Border States program — www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/can-am/export). "Since the U.S. is so big and so close, I decided I may as well start early and figure out all the issues related to duties and brokers." Sandra has also participated in trade missions.
- **Have a plan.** Doing your homework and developing an export strategy are critical first steps. "It's easy to be approached by distributors who want to represent you, but the fit may not be good or you may not be ready."
- **Focus on North America first.** "The U.S. is right in our backyard and it's pretty seamless to do business there. The complexities of exporting offshore are fairly significant."
- Find good partners. "Building an international business is a lot of hard work, long hours and perseverance and I could have thrown in the towel many times, especially during the first five years." The turning point came when Sandra moved the business out of her home and brought in her brother and another partner, who focus on international development and strategy.
- **Create a website for the international marketplace.** Sandra went online early. Today, Robeez has a multi-currency site (including dedicated urls for the U.K. and Australian markets) and is upgrading it to multi-language.

"People are the same everywhere and people are different everywhere."

# HANA ZALZAL

HANA ZALZAL, Founder and President

**CARGO Cosmetics** Toronto, Ontario Tel: (416) 847-0700 Fax: (416) 847-0770

E-mail: hana@cargocosmetics.com Web site: www.cargocosmetics.com

Year Established: 1995 Employees: 15 Years Exporting: 7 Export Sales: 75% Export Markets: U.S., U.K., Saudi Arabia, Puerto Rico, France, Australia

Business Description: A leader in new product innovation, CARGO Cosmetics produces a professional-quality line of make-up and brushes sold through retail stores in Canada and worldwide as well as online. Its multi-use, goanywhere products and award-winning packaging were discovered early on by make-up artists, who use the products on TV shows like Desperate Housewives and CSI. A portion of the proceeds from a special line of celebrity designed custom lipstick shades goes to children's charities.

Tt was a satisfying moment for **Hana Zalzal** to see her cosmetics sold on Paris' Champs Elysées by international retailer Sephora. Equally significant for her business was the day Sephora opened up shop on the West coast of the U.S. "To have the product available right there for our big following of professional make-up artists was an important strategy for us," she explains.

Born in Egypt, Hana - who came to Canada as a child with her family - trained as a civil engineer, initially pursuing that as a career. But her goal was always to have her own business. A lover of cosmetics, she spotted an opportunity. "I saw the consumer mindset shifting and believed that, in the future, niche brands would really take a new foothold in the marketplace," she says. That's when the idea for CARGO Cosmetics was born.

# EXPORTING A LOGICAL EARLY STEP

The company's initial foray into exporting began quickly, precipitated by demand from distributors and stores from around the world. "It was daunting to try to sort through who would be a good distributor and what would be a good store, especially in unfamiliar countries," says Hana. The U.S. seemed to be a natural progression for CARGO, "because I know the U.S. market - I watch their TV and movies, I eat their food, I wear their clothes."

To a large extent, the company's international markets were chosen because of distributors that approached it. But Hana is very selective in choosing CARGO's representatives and turns down more than she accepts. "You need distributors who are credible, trustworthy and can communicate the brand effectively," she emphasizes. "They must be able to keep the branding integrity we've created at head office, but also give it the right spin so that it resonates with their local market."



Hana is also careful about minimizing her risk in foreign markets, which is why CARGO has accounts receivable insurance from Export Development Canada (EDC) to protect it if foreign buyers don't pay. "EDC was our first choice shortly after we started exporting because of its excellent and reliable track record. And they're easy to work with."

# **MARKET NUANCES**

Hana's experience with different cultures has taught her that "People are the same everywhere and people are different everywhere. Women's passion for make-up as a tool for self-expression is constant." And while she feels she has her finger on the pulse of the Canadian and U.S. consumer, she's still learning about the subtle nuances of consumers worldwide. Future plans for CARGO include continued growth in Europe and further expansion in the U.S.

#### Lessons Learned

# **BUILDING A GLOBAL BRAND**

Recipient of Report on Business Magazine's Top 40 Under 40 Award in 2003, Hana Zalzal has always been fascinated by brands and knows all about building a global identity. CARGO has received media coverage in such publications as TIME, The Wall Street Journal, People, Elle and Vogue. Having achieved this awareness without pouring huge dollars into advertising, Hana shares these tips on building a brand that can transcend cultures:

- **Establish an identity.** CARGO is synonymous with quality, style, innovation and good value. Its motto, Be-you-tiful™, encourages women to discover, express and renew themselves.
- **Develop awareness.** CARGO generates publicity through event sponsorships, such as film festival parties. One year, CARGO was even the exclusive make-up in the Oscar gift baskets. Hana also seeks key influencers to use and endorse her products, such as the editors of beauty magazines, celebrity make-up artists and celebrities like Britney Spears.
- Create an emotional link. Link your brand to people's lifestyles or aspirations. CARGO addresses today's women and names its products after global destinations – for example, Bora Bora is a tropical pink lip gloss. "People don't just buy a product, they buy into a brand," insists Hana.
- **Consistently evolve.** Refresh and reinvent continually. "We are constantly trying to make cosmetics 'smarter'." CARGO builds on the support it receives from make-up artists. "We always get their input as we move forward developing new products."

# DON'T GROW IT ALONE

From coast to coast, organizations exist to help women grow their businesses and expand beyond borders. They offer services including business counselling, mentoring, resources, training, financing, information, workshops and seminars. They also provide opportunities for networking and developing business contacts and leads. Be sure to check out those available in your region.

# Alberta Women Entrepreneurs Association (AWE)

Services include a business loan fund.

Tel.: 1-800-713-3558 (Toll free); (403) 777-4250

E-mail: info@awebusiness.com Web Site: www.awebusiness.com

# Canadian Association of Women Executives and **Entrepreneurs (CAWEE)**

A Toronto-based organization for businesswomen at every stage

of their career.

Tel.: (416) 756-0000 E-mail: info@cawee.net Web Site: www.cawee.net

# Centre for Women in Business, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax

Offerings include a one-to-one business advisory service.

Tel.: (902) 457-6449 E-mail: cwb@msvu.ca Web Site: www.msvu.ca/cwb

#### DigitalEve International

A global organization for women in new media, with nine

chapters in Canada.

E-mail: info@digitaleve.org Web Site: www.digitaleve.org

# Newfoundland and Labrador Organization of Women **Entrepreneurs (NLOWE)**

Provides services through a community-based network. Tel: 1-877-754-0555 (Toll free); (709) 754-5555

E-mail: nloweadmin@nfld.net Web Site: www.nlowe.org

# Organization of Women in International Trade: **OWIT-Toronto and OWIT-Alberta**

A 40-chapter worldwide organization designed to promote women doing business globally, with two chapters in Canada.

Tel: Amanda de Vogel (416) 866-5426 E-mail: amanda.devogel@sympatico.ca Web Site: www.owit-toronto.ca

Calgary

Tel: (403) 214-0224

E-mail: karin@owitalberta.org Web Site: www.owitalberta.org

# Prince Edward Island Business Women's Association (PEIBWA)

Operates through a community-based network in partnership with Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA).

Tel: 1-866-892-6040 (Toll free); (902) 892-6040

E-mail: office@peibwa.org Web Site: www.peibwa.org

# Reseau des femmes d'affaires du Québec (RFAQ)

Includes "self-help cells" that meet monthly to exchange information and give advice.

Tel: 1-800-332-2683 (Toll free); (514) 521-2441

E-mail: info@rfaq.ca Web Site: www.rfaq.ca

### Wired Woman Society

Encourages women to explore opportunities in information technology.

Tel: (604) 605-8825

E-mail: info@wiredwoman.com Web Site: www.wiredwoman.com

# Women Business Owners of Manitoba (WBO)

Offers an annual Women Entrepreneur Awards program.

Tel: (204) 775-7981 E-mail: info@wbom.mb.ca Web Site: www.wbom.mb.ca

# Women's Enterprise Society of BC (WESBC)

Services include financing and business-to-business linking.

Tel: 1-800-643-7014 (Toll free); (250) 868-3454

E-mail: info@wes.bc.ca Web Site: www.wes.bc.ca

# Women Entrepreneurs of Canada (WEC)

A Toronto-based network for growth-oriented entrepreneurs that partners with organizations in Canada, the U.S. and abroad.

Tel: 1-866-207-4439 (Toll free)

E-mail: wec@wec.ca Web Site: www.wec.ca

# Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan Inc.

Services include business loans and a youth initiatives program.

Tel: 1-800-879-6331 (Toll free); (306) 477-7173 E-mail: info@womenentrepreneurs.sk.ca Web Site: www.womenentrepreneurs.sk.ca

# Women Presidents' Organization

Provides professionally-facilitated discussions for high-level women presidents (minimum \$1 to \$2 million revenues) through four Canadian chapters in Toronto and Montreal.

Tel: (416) 762-1990

E-mail abalan@karioss.com

Web Site: www.womenpresidentsorg.com

# Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba (WEC)

Services include loans for business start-up and growth. Tel: 1-800-203-2343 (Toll free); (204) 988-1860

E-mail: wecinfo@wecm.ca Web Site: www.wecm.ca

Going Global: Women Entrepreneurs in **International Markets** 

# WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS Connecting With the World



# INTERNATIONAL TRADE CANADA (ITCAN)

Although exporting can appear daunting at times, especially to new exporters, the good news is that you don't have to go it alone. The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service is here to help you expand your business abroad. A network of more than 900 trade commissioners working in Canada and overseas, the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service helps companies like yours succeed in foreign markets by providing timely advice, valuable business intelligence and in-market assistance.

In Canada, trade commissioners working in regional offices can provide you with practical advice on marketing strategies and up to date market and sector information to help smooth your company's path to doing business abroad.

Trade commissioners working in our offices around the world can help your company make better business decisions by providing a range of in-market services, including investigating market prospects, identifying key contacts and troubleshooting difficulties. See page 3 for the office in your region.

# Your gateway to the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service: The Virtual **Trade Commissioner**

By registering and becoming a client of the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service, you can obtain a Virtual Trade Commissioner, a personalized Web page specific to your company's international business interests. The Virtual Trade Commissioner provides on-line access to market research reports. business leads, business news, events and visit information that matches your industry sector and markets of interest. This tool also allows you to request services from trade commissioners in Canada and abroad who are responsible for your industry and target markets, as well as services from our partners, including: Export Development Canada; Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; Canadian Commercial Corporation and Canadian Heritage.

To register for a Virtual Trade Commissioner, visit www.infoexport.gc.ca

#### **CANADEXPORT**

ITCan's international trade and investment publication provides Canadian businesses with information on export opportunities, trade fairs and missions and business conferences, as well as articles on international markets and successful Canadian exporters. CanadExport is available on-line at:

www.international.gc.ca/canadexport

# ITCAN'S BUSINESSWOMEN IN TRADE WEB SITE -

# www.infoexport.gc.ca/businesswomen -

is designed for businesswomen who are looking to export or improve their export performance. This site is your entry to ITCan's programs and services, including practical advice from experienced businesswomen, information on trade events and market leads and opportunities. It also includes links to key contacts in government support agencies, financial institutions, and a variety of regional, national and international associations.



# Team Canada Inc • Équipe Canada inc

# **EXPORTSOURCE**

Exportsource.ca is Canada's most comprehensive source of on-line information on exporting. This site provides a world of export services and tools, whether you're considering exporting or have lots of experience. The popular Step-by-Step Guide to Exporting, available on the site or in print, walks you through every step of the exporting process. You can explore the full range of valuable services available to Canadian businesses with the help of the popular Roadmap to Exporting and the new Export Assistant. www.exportsource.ca



# **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK OF CANADA (BDC)**

BDC is a financial institution wholly owned by the Government of Canada. BDC plays a leadership role in delivering financial, investment and consulting services to Canadian small business, with a particular focus on the technology and export sectors of the economy. BDC's solutions meet the needs of entrepreneurs at every stage of their business' development.

BDC has been actively supporting women entrepreneurs for over ten years. Since 1995, loans to this market segment have more than doubled, reaching \$1.6 billion at March 2005. In Canada, BDC counts a total of 5,600 women business leaders among its clientele.

In addition, BDC has announced the creation of a new \$25 million fund targeted to women entrepreneurs. BDC has dedicated this amount to increase the availability of financing for fastgrowing, women-owned firms in Canada.

For more information, call 1-888-INFO-BDC or visit www.bdc.ca



# GET GOING WITH EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CANADA (EDC)

EDC works closely with women entrepreneurs, helping them take advantage of export opportunities and get paid for their deals. A Crown corporation, EDC provides trade finance and credit insurance services for Canadian exporters and investors in some 200 world markets.

# Get paid for your work

Can you afford a loss? Whether you export regularly or once a year, EDC Accounts Receivable Insurance (ARI) covers up to 90% of the loss if your buyer doesn't pay. And when export receivables are protected by ARI, banks are more willing to accept them as collateral in extending you a line of credit.

# Get money to grow

One of the biggest obstacles smaller exporters face is getting access to enough money to fulfill new export contracts or to post the necessary bonds. EDC can offer various risk-sharing guarantees to banks so they could lend you more money.

# Get practical information

Whether you want to assess your export readiness, check the credit history of a potential buyer, or review free export-related tools, you'll find it at: www.edc.ca/womex

If you are working out the details of an export contract with a potential U.S. or foreign customer, call 1-866-857-6031.

Supplement published by the Market Support Division (TMM), International Trade Canada

#### Elizabeth Reid

Trade Commissioner, Women's Enterprises E-mail: elizabeth.reid@international.gc.ca

#### **Editorial Services:**

Bay Communications and Marketing Inc. E-mail: sbaka@baycomm.ca