

# A UK entrepreneur tells his story

## What you need to succeed in business in Canada

Canada is now welcoming business immigrants more than it has done before. To find out what it is like to move from the UK to Canada, and to start a business there, *Canada Today* spoke to one man who has done it. He is Jeffrey Hewson, president and chief executive officer of Business Cards Tomorrow.

It was in 1984, soon after Jeffrey Hewson had left the multinational office products and supplies company he had been worked for, that he set-up on his own as a business immigrant in Toronto.

At the age of 42, he had spent his business career in the office supplies field, working for some of the largest companies in the market.

While with one of these companies, he had lived and worked in the US, and had travelled extensively across Canada on business.

In fact, Hewson says, it was *'the contacts I made then, and the knowledge of the market I gained, that convinced me to set up my business in Canada.'*

Before his arrival in Toronto, he presented the Canadian immigration department in London with a business plan of action. The plan was based on the fact that he would be using his knowledge of the office supplies field, but the precise nature of the products and services he would offer was left unclear until he had undertaken some market research in Toronto.

Hewson says the main reason this approach was accepted by Canadian immigration officials is that he had a long and highly successful track record in the field of his choice, and that gave a lot of substance and credibility to his plan of action.

*'Before I came to Canada,'* he now says, *'I had a concept and I had a plan, but I did not have the actual specifics laid out.'*

*'I went over the plan with immigration officials in the UK, and gave them the assurances they needed to show that I had funds to support myself, and the means to generate the financing that would be needed to get a company going. Also, they knew I had the contacts and the knowledge to make it possible for my business plan to work.'*

From the opportunities he explored in Canada, Hewson decided that the most viable was Business Cards Tomorrow — a franchise operation that offers high-quality, quick and specialised printing services. Hewson applied for, and was given the Canada-wide franchise.

*'We supply printers with printed items such as business cards, letterhead, envelopes and invitations, which their customers want but which many printers cannot produce themselves on the sort of equipment they have.'*

Business Cards Tomorrow opened for business in 1985. At that time, Hewson employed five people and operated one plant in Willowdale, Ontario, just outside Toronto. This plant now employs 15 people. Hewson has also sold franchises to two other plants (in Vancouver and in Mississauga, Ontario) which employ another 11 people. A fourth franchise operation is planned, also in Ontario.

Hewson has a number of observations about

setting up a business in Canada. Among them: *'In a business sense, Canada is much more North American than it is European. In particular, it is service orientated, so you have to perform at a much higher standard than you would in the UK — particularly if you are in the retail trade. The competition is a lot more aggressive than it is in the UK.'*

*'In fact, if you plan to emigrate, you should visit Canada first. Don't assume that whatever was successful in the UK is going to be successful in Canada too. That may not be so. You should really go to Canada and investigate your business area first-hand.'*

*'If you do not know Canada well, or do not have business contacts there, then it might be advisable to buy into an existing business rather than start one from scratch. There are a lot of opportunities for joint ventures. I think it would be a mistake to try to go it alone unless you have good contacts and have taken the time to do some thorough research.'*

*'There are also a lot of opportunities to operate a franchise. That can often give you the sort of support and local-market knowledge that you need to be successful.'*

*'Banks and government agencies are good sources of information on likely business partners or suitable businesses for you to buy. So is the Federal Business Development Bank. And if you need additional financing, the federal government's Small Business Loan Scheme can be very supportive — especially if you are manufacturing or are setting up a franchise. It offers up to \$100,000 of capital at preferential interest rates.'*

*'People from the UK are well received here, as long as they make a commitment to the country and don't just use it. But Canada is very much a North American community. You can't afford to ignore that fact if you want to succeed there.'*

All things considered, Hewson finds running a business and living in Canada an enjoyable and satisfying experience.

*'The economy's now rapidly growing after the recession of 1982. Politically and socially, the country is well organised, and there's no doubt that Canada's economic ties with the US can be a big plus.'*

*'Outside work, there are tremendous opportunities for recreation, and there are a lot of "intellectual" pursuits.'*

*'As for the schools, they are first class. There is even a good system of private education for people who prefer that.'*

*'I suppose if I were to summarise the advice I would give to business immigrants like myself, I'd recommend visiting Canada, having a good look around, doing some research and seeing if the potential is there for your business.'*

*'If it is, then consider starting up a joint venture or partnership — or buying into a franchise. Use the help that's available from the banks and from government institutions. Don't try to go it alone unless you're very sure of your ground and have excellent contacts in your field.'*

The Immigration Business Development Section in the Canadian High Commission in London will provide prospective business immigrants with appropriate information and advice. ♦