

2000 was a great year for Canadian exporters. Indeed, it was about as good as it gets: world economic growth of nearly 5%, a soft Canadian dollar and solid prices in most Canadian resource markets.

which has been the world's locomotive for the past several years. Most would acknowledge that a moderation in economic growth was necessary if we were to avoid the emergence of inflationary pressures. Indeed, that is why

rest of us down with it. What turned a central bankers' fine-tuning exercise into something far more profound?

The main mechanism seems to have been the bursting of the bubble in technology stocks. Consumer confidence was riding high on that bubble, and now it is coming down to earth. Consumer spending is at the heart of any economy, and if the U.S. consumer stays home, exporters that sell into the U.S. market may as well do the same.

Exports

A fender-bender, not a crash



EDC's Stephen S. Poloz

by Stephen S. Poloz, Vice-President and Chief Economist, Export Development Corporation

The problem with a peak in the business cycle is that every future direction leads downward. And financial markets have been telling us for several months that the good times are over.

a year ago most central banks were raising interest rates, to keep the situation from getting out of hand.

The question now, is, is the slowdown getting out of hand? Many would argue in the affirmative, suggesting that the U.S. economy is headed for a slump and will drag the

Concerns and remedies

There is reason to be concerned. The linkages between financial markets and consumer confidence are not all that well understood. But there are good reasons to believe that the U.S. economy is not falling off a cliff.

First, the U.S. Federal Reserve has demonstrated its willingness to cut interest rates and expand liquidity in the financial system to whatever extent necessary to ensure that the slowdown is not protracted. The Fed's

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have become clients. The firm has also recently garnered a consulting contract in France with Novartis, one of the world's five largest pharmaceutical organizations.

Servicing smaller clients important

That doesn't mean Webmotion has become too big for its britches. Servicing smaller clients is still equally a priority. Indeed, Liscia notes, "Our strategic advantage comes in part from our ability to market a variety of services to small, medium-sized and large enterprises. Not only can we customize and deploy each Web project in a timely and cost-effective manner, but we can assist companies with the development of an infrastructure that grows with their e-business."

To help prospective clients think design questions through, Webmotion has a comprehensive site-planning checklist available on its site.

And proffering advice will be a major new business line for the company, which this year launched an e-consulting business unit, WM Consulting. Its emphasis will be on helping clients refine their Web site ergonomics, and improve online customer service and communication.

"Many clients in the Global 1000 have a need for consulting services which help better define online strategies and how to achieve competitive advantage," states Dorsaf Meliane, head of WM Consulting. "We offer comprehensive e-business industry profiling and personalized Web site analysis. We help firms understand the needs of their target market, how their chief competitors are meeting that demand, and where they themselves need to make changes to remain at the leading edge."

Penetrating foreign markets

How did Webmotion go about penetrating foreign markets?

"Personal contacts and word-of-mouth were very important to us when we were just starting out," says Meliane. "And these are still key factors."

"And from the very beginning we went the trade show route... like this April's E-finance Expo & Conference, to be held at the New York Hilton & Towers. It's only by going up against the best that you can show that you truly belong among them."

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