

# SUCCESS STORIES

## Vancouver Company Breaks into Upscale U.K. Furniture Market

*Selling high quality reproductions of original antique furniture to one of the meccas of that trade – London – is no small feat. Vancouver-based William Switzer and Associates Limited has managed just that.*

With most of its exports to the U.S.A., the over 40-year-old company of close to 100 employees (75 in Canada) started doing some serious research in the U.K. market three years ago.

### Presenting your product

That's when the company also got invited to participate in the very select DECOREX trade show in London, with some assistance from the Program for Export Market Development (PEMD) at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT).

"Trade Commissioners at the Canadian High Commission in London," explains company Vice President Renee Switzer, "also helped us tremendously by providing us with opportunities for networking and hosting a promotion event on its premises – before we opened our own showroom in London last year."

In addition to tapping the vast knowledge and experience of the High Commission, Switzer recommends companies do their homework thoroughly.

### Be prepared

"Make sure there is a market for your product," she advises, "before launching into an operation that may take two to three years before achieving success."

"Be patient," she warns, "because things don't just happen overnight."

In their case, William Switzer and Associates were able to find an agent selling to the top 1 per cent of trade representatives –

their target audience – and who helped get an invitation to participate at DECOREX.

The company has been returning to that show every year now, extending its contacts not only in the U.K. but throughout Europe and the Middle East.

"London is a focal point for many international markets," she says, "and our continuous participation is opening new doors."

Other advice from the 80-per cent export-based company includes facing the challenge of doing business long-distance.

"You must be there often," she says, "and make sure you hire the

right people.

"One of the biggest mistakes to avoid," she adds, "is to try a new venture without full confidence in your product and in the end result, and without plenty of capital and resources."

And Switzer should know, with sales now extending to far away places such as Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong.

*For more information on Switzer and Associates, contact company Vice President Renee Switzer. Tel.: (604) 255-5911, Fax: (604) 255-5931.*

## Janna Systems Inc.

A young and independent Toronto-based software company of 40 people, **Janna Systems Inc.** – specializing in lightning-fast and easy-to-use relationship management solutions – was introduced to the U.K. market about a year ago by a very proactive Canadian High Commission in London.

"We are already expecting our U.K. sales to reach some 10 per cent of our total business in the U.S.A., our main export market since 1995," says Janna Systems President William Tatham, "and we are looking forward to further expansion there and elsewhere in Europe."

He is not only highly appreciative of the Canadian Commercial Section's efforts in

London, but suggests that Canadian companies make greater use of all the help available from their government.

"Exporters should also recognize," Tatham advises, "that product requirements in foreign markets are often different, and should make sure they check out not only the current, but also past clients of any prospective partner or distributor."

For more information on **Janna Systems** – and its Janna Contact family of contact-, document-, and time-management software designed for individual users, small business, and corporate enterprises – contact company President William Tatham. Tel.: (416) 483-7711, Fax: (416) 483-3220.