



Lisa Olfman & Joy Rosen

Presidents & Co-Founders
Portfolio Entertainment Inc.
Toronto, Ontario
Tel: (416) 483-9773
Fax: (416) 483-6537
E-mail:
lofman@portfolio-ent.com
jrosen@portfolio-ent.com

Web site:
www.portfolioentertainment.com
Year Established: 1991
Employees: 15
Years Exporting: 12
Export Sales: 60%
Export Markets: U.S., U.K.,
Europe, Asia, Australia,
Latin America

“ In short, we make the deals, we oversee the creative and we sell to the world. ”

Business Description:

Recognized in the global entertainment industry for its creativity and innovation, Portfolio develops, finances, produces and exports over \$16 million worth of its own world-class live action and animated television productions annually. These include its animated children's series, *RoboRoach* — a runaway hit both in Canada and across Europe. Through its distribution arm, it also sells quality acquired programming covering family, lifestyle, sports and travel entertainment to many of the world's top TV networks and specialty services in over 97 regions. Among its clients are Fox Kids, the Disney Channel, the Discovery Channel and YTV.

Background:

This dynamic and unstoppable duo started Portfolio in a spare room with a borrowed typewriter and small loan after being downsized from the production company where they met. As like-minded personalities and visual storytellers extraordinaire, their skills also mesh: Lisa has a solid background in production and financing; Joy's expertise is in marketing and distribution. "There was a real pull to test ourselves by starting a business and carrying responsibility for our own success or failure."

Honours:

2003 Canadian Woman Entrepreneur of the Year Export Award Recipients; *PROFIT & Chatelaine* Top 100 Women Business Owners 2001, 2002, 2003; *Animation* magazine's Top Rising Women, 2001... plus multiple recognition for its films, including *RoboRoach* as Best Children's Film at the Alliance and Children's Television Awards, 2003.

Why Started Exporting:

With Cable TV and specialty channels on the rise worldwide in the early 90s, the pair recognized a huge opportunity for program suppliers. They began calling producers from across Canada to source

shows to distribute. "Many of them hadn't even thought about selling their programs outside of our borders." And because programming cannot be financed in Canada alone, Portfolio sought out international partnerships to develop its own shows. For example, financing for *RoboRoach* came from the publicly-traded German entertainment company, RTV.

Export Preparation:

Lisa and Joy expanded their distribution catalogue by acquiring a roster of third party productions from both Canadian and U.S. producers. In the early days, they participated in the big industry shows (in Cannes and Las Vegas) under the Telefilm Canada banner (now called The Canada Stand), which provided subsidized booth space support. "It's a wonderful set-up for exporters. When we were starting out, it was great to have access to their savvy staff for advice and to be part of Canada's larger presence at shows. Otherwise, we would have had a very small exhibition. Through good marketing, they are well established and recognized in the global broadcast marketplace — which was so helpful to us initially."

Biggest Exporting Benefit:

"One of the privileges of exporting is the opportunity to socialize with new people and experience different cultures. We've made life-long friends around the world."

Best Exporting Moment:

"When we signed our biggest deal ever — that's when we sold *RoboRoach* to RTV Family Entertainment in Germany and then sold the broadcast rights to Fox Kids worldwide."

Greatest Challenge:

"As a small company, we don't have the weight of the big U.S. studios." But Portfolio has used its size to advantage. "We worked hard on a

strategy that positioned us as an alternative — a tenacious and agile company, quick to make decisions in response to changing trends in the entertainment and licensing market and to acquire quality programs."

Exporting Advice:

- ▶ **Be organized.** "Set your goals, do your research — utilizing federal agencies like Telefilm and the Trade Commissioner Service — and never give up."
- ▶ **Get export insurance for foreign contracts.** "We have insurance from EDC (Export Development Canada) and use their expertise to get information about potential partners. We've been very impressed by the intelligence that EDC has in our area."
- ▶ **Develop and maintain strong international partnerships and alliances.** "Through participating in industry shows, travelling frequently and maintaining communication in person and via phone and e-mail, Lisa and Joy have cultivated a global network of contacts and secured financing from international investors. For example, they negotiated a large investment from a Dutch-based distributor for their first primetime movie, *Stolen Miracle* (later sold to Lifetime in the U.S. where it ranked at the top of the ratings in its time slot). They also presold programs still in development stage to international distributors and broadcasters."

Future Exporting Goals:

"To explore more opportunities in China." Recently, Portfolio sent several of its animation producers to Shanghai. "We are very impressed with the talent pool there and we are in talks with a potential investor for a co-production."



Susan Sweeney

Founder & President
Connex Network Inc.
Bedford, Nova Scotia
Tel: (902) 468-2578
1 888 274-0537
Fax: (902) 468-0380
E-mail:
susan@susansweeney.com

Web site:
www.susansweeney.com
Year Established: 1995
Years Exporting: 9
Export Sales: 95%
Export Markets: U.S., Puerto Rico, Europe, Middle East (Dubai)

“ Don't be afraid of exporting if you're small and an expert. Instead of calling across the street, you're just calling a little further. ”

Business Description:

A leading-edge Internet marketing firm with a predominantly U.S. client base, Connex has several divisions: book publishing; speaking; training (through seminars and CDs); and teleseminars. Owner Susan Sweeney is the author of the highly-regarded Internet marketing book, *101 Ways to Promote Your Web Site* (4th edition), which has sold over 50,000 copies and is now available in German and soon in Chinese. Connex has developed a successful niche in the tourism business and Susan's book, *Internet Marketing for Your Tourism Business*, has become the industry bible and earned her frequent speaking engagements. Originally a consulting firm, Connex' Internet marketing division was merged in 2000 with DDA, a Halifax-based technology company in which Susan has some ownership and continues to provide consulting services.

Background:

Susan — who holds both her C.A. and Certified General Accountant designations — had a keen eye for the future of marketing on the Internet. During her stint as a trade commissioner in the early 90's, she was responsible for helping technology companies sell their services worldwide and saw a void in their marketing expertise. This recognition — along with a good computer background — convinced her to start Connex and to pursue the U.S. market with confidence. "As soon as I saw the World Wide Web, I said 'Eureka'; this is how people are going to market in the future. I could see that smaller players with smaller budgets could compete with the bigger ones using the Internet." Today, Susan is a sought-after Internet marketing and e-business expert.

Why Started Exporting:

"Because of my background as a trade commissioner, exporting was very familiar to me and I had no fear. I started in the U.S. because I'm very much a business person and I go where the business is. The U.S. market makes quick decisions, goes for the best and is willing to pay for good speakers."

Export Preparation:

As a former trade commissioner, Susan was well prepared to play the export game. Prior to that career, she had owned a small manufacturing company and used the Government of Canada's international trade services to help set up distribution channels across Canada and in New England. "It was a very useful process. Many trade commissioners have a wealth of knowledge, great contacts and good programs."

Biggest Exporting Benefit:

"The biggest benefit is financial. I can do more business faster in the U.S. where decision-making is very quick and speaker budgets are bigger."

Lesson Learned:

"As a service-based business, it's so easy doing business with a client in the U.S. I fly down, spend the day, come back, do the project and it's delivered. There is no time wasted in excessive meetings."

Exporting Advice:

- ▶ **Put aside any trepidation.** "If you're small and an expert, don't be afraid of exporting. Instead of calling across the street, you're just calling a little further. It's easy. You can go out to the world and often find an easier, more lucrative sale as well as people who will refer you to others."

▶ **Use the Internet to research your target market.** "Focus on your bottom line and find out in advance who has money to pay for what you are selling. The Internet is a wealth of knowledge on potential customers — their Web sites are a good indication of their level of professionalism and the size of their budgets."

▶ **Market your business electronically.** "It's so much easier to do international trade now because of the Web and e-mail. Have an awesome Web site because that is a reflection of you and how you do business. And be sure to have in electronic form all your marketing support material and other information that prospects and clients may want, so that you can follow up on requests the same day."

▶ **Become an industry expert.** "Try to find a niche in your industry, write a book that is unique, find speaking opportunities and send out an e-newsletter. I send mine regularly to an international list of 20,000 names and so I tend to be top of mind when they are looking for an internet marketing speaker or consultant."

▶ **Be aware of cross-border protocol.** "If you are a consultant, be sure that all financial transactions for business conducted in the U.S. — all invoicing and collecting — is done through your company and not through you personally. Never accept payment in person."

Future Exporting Goals:

"I like the U.S. market and my focus will remain there as well as on developing my own Internet projects. I have a lot to package and sell on the product side in order to help businesses powerfully augment their marketing efforts."