

Where Are They Now?



“ Make sure you are on Canada's trade commissioners' radar. ”

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Year Established: 1995
Employees: 6
Years Exporting: 12
1997 Export Sales: 100%
2007 Export Sales: 100%
Export Markets: U.S., Europe, Asia, Middle East

DESCRIPTION: A leader in BioDefence technologies, ALERT B&C™ provides high-quality products and solutions to the military, airports, police, fire departments and hospitals in order to ensure the safety and the security of individuals worldwide.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE: Not only is the company's main TRAKER™ product portable, but it can detect and identify more than one agent, such as a virus, fungus, bacteria or chemical, and more than one form of agent – solid, liquid or gas. Other products in the market can only detect single agents.

GROWTH PATH: With a background in Molecular Biology, Suzanne started the predecessor of ALERT B&C™ – Genomics One Corporation, a biotech company focusing on genomic research – in 1995. She took the company public and acquired subsidiaries in Toronto and the U.S. but found little room for continued growth after the technology market crash early this decade. As a result of buying patents in 2005 for devices that can detect and identify biological and chemical agents and then purchasing a distributor in France that knew how to assemble and manufacture the technology, Suzanne changed her company focus to BioDefence and, in 2006, renamed it ALERT B&C™.

INTERNATIONAL MARKETING APPROACH: “Sending e-mails and knocking on doors would take years to develop business, if at all. When you are targeting the military and civil security as well as airport officials, it's important to have contacts such as a General or someone in the Ministry of Defence, who will make the introduction to the people in charge. Our ‘channel directors’ are people from the field. We are also investigating partnerships with companies that provide security solutions – from motion detectors through to magnetic cards – so that we can enter specific new markets faster than doing it on our own.”

LESSON LEARNED: “The name of the game in any export or sale is always competition and pricing. If you want to survive, you must be able to play with pricing as the market changes and you must have the ability to support it.”

BIGGEST EXPORTING CHALLENGE: “It can be tricky finding the right partner to work with in a different country. When choosing, it's important to meet in person initially. Look for someone who will give you a competitive advantage so that you can go further faster and find a partner who believes in your product and needs it in their portfolio.”

EXPORT TIP: “Make sure you are on Canada's trade commissioners' radar, because they will send you information on various companies and will invite you to participate in trade missions.”

FUTURE GROWTH: Since Europe, the U.S. and Asia are the biggest markets for BioDefence, Suzanne will focus there. ALERT B&C™ continues to work to establish connections in the military and other target sectors. “If you want to sell to governments, you have to hire people who come from that background and understand the process.”

Reflections on 1997 Washington Trade Mission

Benefits: “I made great contacts and have kept them. Some of the people I met even joined as Board members. What was very interesting and helpful for me was to find out that, regardless of the business you are in, you always go through the same growing pains.”

Highlight: “There were open forums with U.S. and Canadian government officials, where we asked questions, learned about the programs that could help us and gave recommendations on improvements that would be helpful for women in business. It was the first time I had the opportunity to participate in something like that and give direct feedback.”

Biggest Take-Away: “One of my goals was to source good partners for our products, but since I could not find technologies or products that fit well in our portfolio, we later acquired companies in the sales and distribution business in Canada and the U.S..”