User groups are another example of an easily tapped group of influencer. Most major centers (eg. San Francisco, Boston) have very large computer user groups (25,000 members) made up of people who are the technical advisors or informal internal computer experts who advise staff within their organizations on the best new software programs. Most of these user groups will allow you to demo your product at their monthly meeting. This channel attracts the attentions of such major players as Borland and Microsoft etc. Why would Bill Gates or Mr. Kahn speak to such groups if they did not feel these groups are an important influencer of the purchase of their software?

Other key ways to get your product in front of the marketplace at low cost include seminars, technical papers, etc.

7.10 Consider Private Branding

The strongest new player in software distribution will be the large mass marketers such as Sears. Consider trying to strike a deal to private brand your software with these people because they will be looking for products to use to compete with the major computer stores as well as to increase their margins. Count on people like Sears to do private brands in software just as they have done in other parts of their marketing operations.

7.11 Target the New Super Stores:

The emergence of the new super stores with larger floor space indicates that the customers want a larger selection of software that better meets their specific needs. Super Stores with their larger shelf space may offer such a channel.

7.12 Geographical Focus, Your Product Introduction:

Remember you will have to advertise, line up dealers, get reviews, train dealers, provide sales support, sign up VARs, etc, in every local market you tackle. It makes a lot more sense to geographically focus this effort. California for example has a market that is as large as the total Canadian market. Plan the size and distribution of your sales force accordingly. Plan your press, advertising and other programs to take on one market sector at a time to conserve your resources.

Major Canadian computer consulting and product companies have come to the California market and found out that the strategy they used for success in Canada has not worked here. The two markets are totally different. You must be prepared top pay the price for your education. Don't think you are smarter or different than these other companies. Almost without failure this expensive learning curve has been the price all of these companies have paid.