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Year Founded: 1966

Employees: 60

Export Sales: 14%

Years Exporting: 3

Export Markets: United States

“Call the Trade Commissioners – it's their job to help, they're good at it ... and it's essential to have that network in place.”

Business Description:

Shareholders Barbara Ryan, Cindy Roma and Sydney Ryan operate their company, Telelink, The Call Centre Inc., as an in-bound customer service call centre specializing in web-based applications. What began as a basic answering service in 1966 by founder J. Thomas Ryan (Sydney's father and late husband to Barbara) has grown into a comprehensive customer relationship management company, utilizing new technology and innovations and boasting over 600 clients.

Exporting Tactics:

With the drop in telecom prices in the late 90s, these three women entrepreneurs realized they could compete in the international marketplace and went about it by implementing a well-thought-out plan. They participated on a Newfoundland Trade Mission to Boston in May 2000, which turned out to be an excellent fact-finding opportunity.

“We went to Boston with the notion that Americans wanted the newest technology available, but we found out that what they really craved was a return to a more traditional client/supplier relationship with a focus on customer service, while still using modern tools,” explains Sydney. “That happens to be our strength, and a weakness of many of the large corporations that dominate their market.”

Their next trade mission to Atlanta with Team Canada Atlantic, 2001, was so successful that they had a

deal struck with a U.S. client before boarding the plane home. That company is still a client of Telelink's and has since referred several others to them as well.

Networking Strategy:

Telelink has used many of the provincial and federal government services available to develop an effective exporting plan and access potential American clients. The Program for Export Market Development (PEMD) was especially helpful in the early stages.

They also used the services of Export Development Canada (EDC) extensively in the beginning and continue to do so today. One of their U.S. accounts fell victim to the NASDAQ correction in the fall of 1999. Had Telelink not been insured through EDC, they would have been in recovery mode for a long time. “All of our U.S. accounts are now insured – it lets us sleep at night.”

“The Trade Commissioners have also been wonderful match-makers. We don't sell widgets to market 'X'; we provide a service that's not easily slotted...and they've taken up the challenge of finding suitable markets for us.”

Favourite Exporting Moment:

“Our trade mission to Atlanta, definitely. We attended functions

with the Prime Minister and landed our first international contract — it was then that we knew we could compete internationally.”

Export Tips:

- ▶ **Be focused and be prepared.** “Once you get your strategy down, you may need to adjust it a little because of outside influences, but it's important to stay focused on your objectives and not jump on every bandwagon that comes along.”
- ▶ **Build a strong team.** “We built a phenomenal management team right from the beginning and we were lucky we did because they were prepared when our export sales skyrocketed.”
- ▶ **Utilize government resources.** “Companies just starting to export shouldn't be afraid to call the Trade Commissioners — it's their job to help, and they're good at it.”

Future Plans:

For now, the women plan to continue pursuing the U.S. market over the next year. “We enjoy doing business with the Americans, and there are few cultural differences, virtually no language barrier and the growth rate is quite manageable at this point.”

Building Your Business Relationships ...

Alberta Women's Enterprise Initiative Association

Dedicated to helping Alberta Women start and expand their businesses and increase awareness of businesswomen.

Tel.: (403) 777-4250

E-mail: info@aweia.ab.ca

Web Site: www.aweia.ab.ca

Canadian Association of Women Executives and Entrepreneurs

A Toronto based organization for businesswomen to develop and expand their businesses and professions, while increasing their visibility in entrepreneurial roles.

Tel.: (416) 756-0000

E-mail: info@cawee.net

Web Site: www.cawee.net

Newfoundland and Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs

The focus is on the start-up phase. It is aimed at promoting financial support options and facilitating rural locations to larger economic areas.

Tel.: 1-877-754-5555 (Toll free)

E-mail: nloweadmin@nfld.net

Web Site: www.nlowe.org

Reseau des femmes d'affaires du Québec

A Quebec businesswomen's network which promotes contacts, self-help and dynamic business networks.

Tel.: (514) 521-2441

E-mail: nbeaudoin@rfaq.ca

Web Site: www.rfaq.ca

The Women's Enterprise Society of BC (WESBC)

Assists women who are starting, purchasing or growing a business. Services include financing, training, business counselling and business and to business linking.

Tel.: 1-800-643-7014 (Toll free in B.C.)

(250) 868-3454

E-mail: info@wes.bc.ca

Web Site: www.wes.bc.ca

Women Entrepreneurs of Canada (WEC)

Encourages and fosters the growth, development, and success of women entrepreneurs in Canada. Provides high quality programming, person to person networking and links WEC members with common interests.

Tel.: (416) 367-4004

E-mail: wec@wec.ca

Web Site: www.wec.ca

Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan Inc.

Works with women who are considering a career in business, starting a business, or operating an existing business.

Tel.: 1-800-879-6331 (Toll free)

(306) 359-9732

E-mail: info@womenentrepreneurs.sk.ca

Web Site: www.womenentrepreneurs.sk.ca

Women in International Trade-Ontario (WITO)

First Canadian Chapter of the organization, offering seminars and education, trade information, networking opportunities and global business contacts.

Tel.: (416) 973-5157

E-mail: rice.candice@ic.gc.ca

Web Site: www.wito.ca

Organization of Women in International Trade -Alberta Chapter (OWIT)

Members of the new Alberta Chapter will become part of a worldwide network of more than 2,000 professionals whose involvement in OWIT enhances their knowledge of current global trade issues.

Tel.: (403) 287-1759

E-mail: leann@concreteglobal.com

Web Site: http://www.owit.org/albertapages.html

Centre for Women in Business, Mount Saint Vincent University

The centre offers programs dedicated to the education of women who are interested in entrepreneurship.

Tel.: (902) 457-6449

E-mail: cwb@msvu.ca

Web Site: www.msvu/cwb.ca

Prince Edward Island Businesswomen's Association

The P.E.I.B.A. is committed to fostering continued growth in the number of women owned businesses in Prince Edward Island. It assists these women entrepreneurs to establish and maintain their businesses. Some of the programs that the association offers include: mentoring, coaching, networking opportunities and advocacy.

Tel.: (902) 628-1140

E-mail: tracey@tallenassociates.com

Web Site: www.tallenassociates.com/PEIBWA.FAQ.htm

The Women's Business Owners of Manitoba (WBO)

The WBO, Winnipeg Chapter, supports and inspires excellence, learning and growth in business. Women business owners share in their successes and mentor other women entrepreneurs.

Tel.: (204) 775-7981

E-mail: info@wbom.mb.ca

Web Site: www.wbom.mb.ca