



**Sylvie Boileau**

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Year Established: 1955  
 Employees: 125  
 Years Exporting: 15  
 Export Sales: 18%  
 Export Markets: Central America, South America, U.S., Belgium, Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia

**“Know who you are dealing with before quoting on big projects.”**

**Business Description:**

A service-oriented frontrunner in the industry, Dubo Electric is a distributor of electrical and automation products to industrial, commercial, institutional and electrical contractors' markets, as well as to residential customers, designers and architects in Canada and internationally. With all of its branches and central warehouse linked by an advanced computer system, Dubo provides the highest degree of technical local sales service and support on a provincial, national and export basis. The company is also part of Canada's first buying and marketing group in this field — I.E.D., composed of independent electrical distributors.

**Background:**

Sylvie started as a receptionist in this family-owned business, gradually taking on responsibility for special projects. She and her sister, Johanne, purchased the company from their father in 1979, with Sylvie becoming President in 1993 and Johanne now the Controller. Sylvie established her credibility as a woman in this male-dominated industry and earned an excellent reputation among her peers through active networking, involvement in industry associations and sitting on various boards. She has also made a mark by leading an export buying consortium throughout Quebec.

**Honours:**

Finalist for Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award, 2001 and 2002; and 1999 Woman of the Year, Chamber Of Commerce, Montreal

**Why Started Exporting:**

Sylvie began to look at exporting in order to increase market share. The first opportunities came in Algeria and Saudi Arabia as a result of doing business with

Canadian engineering firms that wanted Dubo to assist them with overseas projects.

From there, the company's export growth was dictated by the need to deal with countries with the same electrical standards since most of its products are manufactured in North America.

**Export Preparation:**

Among the many resources Sylvie accessed were the Trade Commissioner Service, Industry Canada, the Canadian International Development Agency and Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec. She also found the Chamber of Commerce in target cities particularly valuable. "They were very efficient and were able to give us detailed information about our specific market as well as leads to good agents and distributors. They really did work for us in terms of value-added." Dubo also participated in trade shows, mainly in Brazil and Central America, and started export consortiums with other companies to help penetrate markets in Poland, Russia, Czechoslovakia and Central America.

**Biggest Exporting Benefit:**

"Exporting generally takes more time and effort than doing business domestically, so it's quite rewarding when you get the order...and even better when you get paid in advance, especially by the more financially risky countries."

**Greatest Challenge:**

"Because each country is different, it's a challenge to get to know the right people and understand how the culture works. In Central America, for example, everyone has titles, and you may think you're dealing with the president of the company or someone with decision-making authority when that is not the case at all."

**Exporting Advice:**

► **Get export insurance.** "It's always important to go through EDC (Export Development Canada) when you're taking on big projects because there's a lot of risk in terms of receivables. You should be cautious and take time to evaluate. It's better to have a small project than a big one without getting paid. And try to get payment at the time of ordering if you have any concerns."

► **Understand the buyer.** "Never quote on a big project or take orders without knowing who you are dealing with. It's better to take a trip to the country to see if you'll be doing business with a serious company that has a track record. And be patient."

► **Find good partners and nurture them.** "The Chambers of Commerce are the most valuable way to source good agents or distributors. And, once you've found them, keep the communication channels open through regular visits (every two or three months) and ongoing telephone and e-mail contact."

**Future Exporting Goals:**

Sylvie wants to leverage existing relationships in the markets in which Dubo does business before expanding elsewhere. Her goal is to increase exports to 25% of the company's total sales. "We should achieve that in the coming two or three years if everything goes as planned."



**Rosaleen Citron**

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Web site: www.whitehatinc.com  
 Year Established: 2001  
 Employees: 18  
 Years Exporting: 3  
 Export Sales: 30%  
 Export Markets: U.S. and Europe

**“An incredible number of benefits are available to women opening a business in the U.S.”**

**Business Description:**

A trailblazing information technology security provider to global Fortune 1000 companies and governments, WhiteHat employs industry-leading security practitioners and offers best of breed and market-leader security software and hardware products. Its portfolio includes professional security consulting services, security software and hardware products, product training, and security education and training. "We can export our trainers to wherever our client may need them. They cover everything from security awareness for administrators to counter hacking."

**Background:**

With an entrepreneurial background, Rosaleen's rise to become one of Canada's top businesswomen in high tech started when she began working for one of the world's largest enterprise software providers. In 1993, she founded 4COMM Inc. as a computer security solutions vendor and was instrumental in pioneering solutions for Fortune 500's. "There was a real hole in terms of security products for networks, so we were able to trail blaze." In 2000, 4COMM was acquired by a Dot Com company. In 2001, Rosaleen launched WhiteHat and now is a frequent and compelling speaker and media spokesperson on understanding the need for security in today's high-tech world.

**Honours:**

Rosaleen is among the PROFIT and Chatelaine Top 100 Canadian Women Business Owners for 2002 & 2003 and was nominated for this year's Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

**Why Started Exporting:**

"Canada is 10% of the U.S. market, so — at minimum — we'll likely quadruple our business by exporting there."

**Trade Resources Used:**

Among the resources that Rosaleen has tapped into are: insurance from Export

Development Canada to protect the company from non-payment by clients ("Those insurance policies and services that EDC offers are amazing."); accessing market research from the Trade Commissioner Service ("They're very helpful when we have issues or questions."); participation in industry events ("We attend many trade shows and conferences where we get to meet with our peers and suppliers."); membership in the Canadian Advanced Technology Association ("Very helpful because they're really promoting Canadian technology.") and the Burlington Economic Development Corporation ("BEDC provides support and offer programs for local companies and helps to promote us in the U.S. and globally. The infrastructure and programs they have for business are very impressive. I have to say that Burlington has been the most supportive city I've ever been in.")

**Greatest Challenge:**

"Cross-border shipping. You have to ensure your relationship with your customs broker is good so that your product arrives when expected. The customer shouldn't know or care where it is coming from; the sale should be seamless...and that includes returns as well. Do the work for the customer."

**Exporting Advice:**

► **Get involved with your local community politicians.** "It's amazing what they can do to increase your visibility. Start with the business development office, get on their mailing list, attend functions and network, network, network. You'll find people who want to reach out to other businesses. It can mushroom. We've gained new business locally or with their offices in other locations, whether it be Canada, the U.S. or Europe."

► **Have confidence.** "Don't be afraid that your product or service is inferior to the American's. Canadian products and

services tend to be incredibly good. Give exporting a shot. Don't back off."

► **Tap into local economic development incentives.** "If you want to open a U.S. location, get down there and get to know communities in your target area. Many of them have incentives for businesses — such as waiving taxes for several years while you get going or providing stipends towards employees because you will be hiring Americans. It's a matter of picking the right city."

► **Get in touch with the tax people.** "You also need to set up your tax codes and your tax ID in the U.S. through the IRS. There are an incredible number of benefits available to women opening a business there. For example, women-owned businesses are classified as disadvantaged and if you register your company with the Federal Government, they will assist you in receiving a proportionate portion of government bids in your industry."

**Future Exporting Goals:**

"Our goal is to be the preeminent North American security provider, and I'd like to see our export sales at 80% of the business. For 2004, we have a big focus on the American marketplace and we're planning to open an office in New York State. We're also concentrating on the British and Irish marketplaces, which are very progressive in terms of security. We've already begun discussions with potential partners in other overseas countries that are becoming more security conscious. And certainly exporting our security education and training is in our plans, but it will take some time and effort to build that up. We've been approached many times — so, now that the economy is bouncing back, we can start looking at these other opportunities."