

Big Knowledge thinks big at the World Bank

Big thinking has brought Big Knowledge into global markets. Understanding that what counts is creativity, not company size, the Montréal-based e-learning solutions provider has joined forces with global institutions, taking advantage of assistance from the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service and its partners. Such strategizing, coupled with first-rate business offerings, landed the company its latest contract, with the World Bank's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA).

Big Knowledge Enterprises Inc., which has been in the technology-based training business since 1994, has become a leader in the development of total e-learning solutions, which it customizes for financial, pharmaceutical, biotechnology and wireless telecommunications companies, as well as for several global institutions—namely, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the UN and, most recently, the World Bank.

International orientation gives edge

The company has an international orientation that is crucial for penetrating world markets: it employs a multilingual, multicultural staff and regularly produces training programs in English, French and Spanish.

It was what company President and Chief Strategist Anthony Siregar calls the “international look and feel” of its proposal that gave Big Knowledge an edge for winning the MIGA contract. “We made sure we respected the multi-ethnicity of the World Bank. We provided graphics and other multimedia representations of situations that reflected the Bank’s multicultural environment.”

Another edge was its participation, in March 2005, in a mission to the World Bank organized by the World Trade Centre Montréal (the Montréal Board of Trade’s export services branch). During the five-day mission, Mr. Siregar and International Marketing Director Byron Biggs met with a dozen World Bank project leaders, learning about specific projects around the world and also about the World Bank’s mission and priorities, one of which is education.

While in Washington, Mr. Siregar got wind of MIGA’s need for an investment promotion training course for its clients. Big Knowledge won the contract, based not only on the international look and feel of its presentation but also on the rigorous approach it takes to course design and production.

Learning from experience

From previous experience with IATA, the company had already learned about the importance of respecting the international culture embodied by such an institution. That knowledge served it well in winning a subsequent United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) contract in December 2004 to produce courses for 50,000 UN employees in 166 countries.

For the UN contract, Big Knowledge benefitted from assistance from its International Trade Canada (ITCan) Regional Office, which supplied the company with contacts at the Canadian Commercial Corporation (CCC), Export Development Canada (EDC) and the Canadian Consulate General in New York, each of which provided valuable support and advice.

“The ITCan Regional Office also gave us excellent advice on how to do business with the UN, which helped us enormously to prepare our proposal and presentation,” explains Mr. Siregar. “We learned a lot from our work with the UNDP,” he adds, “which helped us get into WB/MIGA.”

Big Knowledge is currently targeting markets in the Asia-Pacific region, specifically China and India. The company’s strategy for penetrating these two markets is three-pronged: 1) working through its current network of customers that already deal with these countries (UN, WB, IATA), 2) linking up with the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service abroad, and 3) working with government agencies in Canada that promote the export of Canadian know-how.

“Canada can export its technology to many parts of the world without being second class,” says Mr. Siregar. “Our technology at Big Knowledge has received rave reviews from the UN, IATA and the World Bank—and they see a lot of technology. The bottom line is we’re finding that a small entrepreneurial company like Big Knowledge, in a middle economy like Canada, can compete in the global sandbox if we link up with global institutions—which are already our customers—and if we avail ourselves of the support available from the Canadian government and its partners. You don’t have to be a Goliath. You just have to be creative.”

For more information, contact International Trade Canada’s International Financing Division, tel.: (613) 995-7251, e-mail: ifinet@international.gc.ca.

CANADEXPORT supplement

GOING GLOBAL Women Entrepreneurs in International Markets



As you can see from the incredibly varied examples of the women profiled within, women-owned firms are a tremendous entrepreneurial force in the Canadian economy. Over the past 20 years, Canada has seen a 200% increase in the number of such firms, with the result that, by 2001, nearly half (47%) of all small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Canada had at least one female owner. Majority women-owned SMEs produced commercial revenues of \$72 billion in 2000.

However, despite such impressive statistics of achievement by women-owned firms, roughly half the number of SMEs primarily owned by women - compared to those primarily owned by men - reported exporting in 2001 (6.9% versus 13.4%). Women-owned firms were less likely to export regardless of economic sector, size of firm, growth orientation or access to capital.

I therefore encourage women entrepreneurs to take advantage of the many resources that International Trade Canada (ITCan) and its partners in Team Canada Inc have to offer, and which are highlighted in this supplement. A wealth of information about programs and services is available to help you realize the benefits of international trade, such as a trade commissioner in the ITCan regional office in each province who is committed to helping women entrepreneurs; Export Development Canada’s special team to assist women entrepreneurs; and the Business Development Bank of Canada’s \$25 million fund for women entrepreneurs.

International Trade Canada’s team of over 900 trade commissioners is ready to help you take on the world. Working together, we look forward to celebrating your company’s success next year.

James Scott Peterson
Minister of International Trade

