

BCNet Set to Cross Canada — from page 1

tional Trade, in cooperation with the governments of Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Nova Scotia. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is managing the implementing of this business matching service.

Initially, BCNet will operate in these four provinces, but it will gradually expand to encompass the entire country in the coming months.

Launched in Canada in January 1994, the network provides access to thousands of up-to-date, vetted profiles of companies that are potential partners in the production of all manner of goods and services, in all industrial sectors. These profiles provide information on who is looking for what types of partnerships and where.

Yet BCNet is much more than an electronic bulletin board service. What makes BCNet unique is a team of over 1,100 accredited advisors in 35 countries who are committed to helping their clients find partners abroad.

BCNet's Advisors

This team is made up of professionals such as bankers, accountants and financial management consultants who work closely with local business people within their communities.

These people know their clients, their clients' businesses, and are

familiar with local business conditions. As BCNet advisors, they use this expertise to select those partnership prospects that will best serve their clients' needs.

Business owners, on the other hand, have the comfort of dealing with local entrepreneurs like themselves, who understand the challenges and opportunities that each one faces. BCNet's advantage lies in the personal value-added that its advisors bring to their work. In addition to the local insight that these team members contribute to the network, there is also a strong element of inter-personal cooperation. Through BCNet, advisors are linked to like-minded professionals who have equal knowledge and understanding of the business conditions in their communities. Beyond this formal connection, the advisors also develop personal contacts with their offshore counterparts.

If no matches are produced by the computer, this informal network enables advisors to deal with each other directly and discuss opportunities that might not be registered in the system. Clients benefit because they leverage one system for two: the electronic and the inter-personal.

BCNet's Information

Accuracy, timeliness and confidentiality of information are as-

sured in the BCNet database.

Before being registered, a business must seriously commit to pursuing international cooperation. This must be reflected in its business plan. Once this decision is made, the business owner provides the BCNet advisor with information regarding the types of cooperative ventures sought, as well as detailed information about their company and its operations.

In conjunction with the business owner, the local BCNet advisor first prepares a Cooperation Profile, as well as a confidential company activity record. This profile describes the type of enterprise, the opportunities sought, and the target markets, but does not identify the company.

Profiles are collected electronically by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Ottawa and forwarded to the central computer in Brussels. The computer generates a list of potential matches, which the Canadian advisor uses to create a short list of the most appropriate candidates for the business owner to review. If a lead looks promising, and only with the permission of their clients, the advisors exchange — in complete confidence — the more detailed company activity records about the firms concerned. After reviewing this information, if the prospect still seems worth pursuing, the advisors then could step back and let the businesses concerned finalize the deal directly or could act as consultants.

BCNet has an enviable track record. To date, over 38,000 business matches have been found. In 1992 alone, 17,000 partnership offers were entered, and 15,931 matches resulted — a match rate of 94 per cent.

Tim Page, Senior Vice-President,

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