

# Orion 2000 Nets Potential \$85 Million

**K**arim Lakhani has a vision of the not-so-distant future in Manila, Bangkok, and dozens of other leading Asian cities: a pager beeps, and the owner of a small store checks the message, then pulls out his cell phone to sell his shares in a particular company. His Internet package has been monitoring the price of selected stocks and beeped him when it hit the right price.

Or, says the youthful president of Richmond, B.C.'s, Orion 2000 Technologies Ltd., you could replace the store-owner with a farmer in a rural area who wants to check grain prices on the New York Stock Exchange.

Those are just two of the possibilities that Lakhani's company hopes to see become reality in the next few years. In the meantime, Orion took part in the Team Canada 1997 trade mission to Asia to begin marketing A-Net, a secured global interchange network for electronic data interchange, debit, credit and electronic banking.

"The reason that we chose Asia as the starting point is that we want to set a standard. We are hoping that standard features that we supply become the mainstay of a large number of small and medium-sized companies."

Lakhani believes that sales of \$50 million to \$100 million are a realistic goal over the next five years. He has good reasons for his optimism: Orion 2000 came away from the 1997 Team Canada trade mission with agreements or memorandums of understanding worth a potential \$85 million.

Orion signed tripartite agreements worth \$65 million with nine Philippine development banks — members of the Association of Development Financing Institutions in Asia and the Pacific (ADFIAP) — to develop its A-Net network for ADFIAP members.

ADFIAP has 79 member banks in 33 Asia-Pacific countries. Lakhani believes the Association's 10 million customers will provide an excellent base from which to launch his company's products.

Orion also signed memorandums of understanding with the Industrial Finance Corporation of Thailand and with the Korea Technology Banking Corporation for the A-Net network and secured electronic commerce products. Each project is valued at \$10 million.

Orion has lined up partners in Canada and the United States to develop its products, including TRW Inc., SLM Software of Toronto and RAT International of Victoria.

Lakhani is optimistic that once sales start coming in, "probably twice as many jobs will get created locally as get created overseas." In addition, all of Orion's joint venture

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Karim Lakhani  
President

partners will also see job gains, because, Lakhani adds, "it's a whole network of services that is required."

"This trip worked out very well for us because we developed contacts in Korea that would probably have taken years to develop," says Lakhani. He adds that the Team Canada mission gave Orion "credibility" in the eyes of potential foreign investors and other Canadian firms.