

KAREN POTTLE

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Web Site: www.exploits.nf.ca
Year Founded: 1997
Employees: 9
Export Sales: 25%
Years Exporting: 2
Export Market: United States



"Exporting is the only way to really grow your business. I want to become known as a brand, so I have to be in the United States.

After you've dealt with one part there, it makes the country seem smaller."

Best Moment

"That first phone call for a reorder, when the U.S. buyer said: 'We love it and sold it all, and we want to double our next order.' You think, 'Oh my gosh—I've arrived!'"

Export Tips

Get 'Intelligent' Advice before You Tackle Exporting. "Make sure that your research is with experts in the industry."

Know Your Prices and How to Turn Them into U.S. Dollars. "It's important to get the right information on tariffs and duties on your product, and then put this into a neat little package so that buyers understand what they are paying for. It's best to factor duties into your price for the U.S. market."

For more great exporting tips from Karen Pottle, see: www.infoexport.gc.ca/businesswomen/exportlibrary/successstories-e.asp

Calling All Women Inventors

If you are a woman inventor, you'll soon have an opportunity to be in the spotlight. The Canadian Woman Inventor of the Year Awards (CWIYA) are being established in Canada by the Women Inventors Project (WIP). The WIP is a non-profit charitable organization working to increase the number of successful inventors and entrepreneurs in Canada. Visit: www.interlog.com/~womenip

The CWIYA will encompass four categories:

- 1 Independent Inventor - with existing product
- 2 Inventor in Industry/Academia - a corporate inventor
- 3 Youth Inventor - with two awards (for Grades 1-8 and 9-12)
- 4 Threshold Inventor - a start-up or good idea inventor

A call for nominations will be announced on March 7 in Toronto at an International Women's Day event sponsored by the Canadian Association of Women Executives and Entrepreneurs. The inaugural awards will be presented on International Women's Day in March 2003. For more information, contact **Chips Klein**, Co-director of the Women Inventors Project **Tel.:** (905) 731-0328, **E-mail:** c.klein@utoronto.ca

TANYA SHAW WEEKS

President and Chief Executive Officer
Softwear Design Group Inc., Unique Patterns Design Ltd.
and Virtually Yours Inc.
 Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

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Web sites: www.uniquepatterns.com
 www.thevirtualyou.com
 www.image-experts.com
Year Founded: 1994
Employees: 20
Export Sales: 93%
Years Exporting: 6
Export Markets: United States, Singapore, Japan, Australia and England



"Success in the U.S. market will give you credibility in other markets."

Help Accessed

Through the years, Tanya has turned to Industry Canada and DFAIT for export advice and has tapped into the Canadian consulates throughout the United States to identify opportunities and customers. Staff participated in New Exporters to Border States (NEBS) missions and used the Program for Export Market Development (PEMD) for marketing support in exploring new areas and generating sales leads.

Key Learning

"Having the majority of our sales in the U.S. market gives us, as a Nova Scotia company, credibility in other foreign markets and makes it easier to enter them."

Best Moment

"Bringing Butterick/Vogue and McCall's to the table, which are very well-known U.S. companies. Being their service arm gives our much smaller Eastern Canadian company a lot of credibility in the industry."

Export Tips

Focus on Learning about Each Market. "Even within the United States, be on your toes to understand the differences needed in approach. Certain areas may need a more personal relationship than others."

Find Strategic Partners. "If possible, align yourself with a partner or company that has a complementary product or needs what you have. That will help your company to grow quicker in a new market." The company's relationship with Butterick/Vogue is a good example.

For more information, see full profile at: www.infoexport.gc.ca/businesswomen/exportlibrary/successstories-e.asp

Description

Unique Patterns is the only company in North America to provide custom-made women's clothing patterns through its proprietary software. Over 12,000 home-sewing customers receive a video and catalogue as part of their membership. The company is also the custom service arm for Butterick/Vogue Patterns in New York and is just beginning to work with McCall's. After developing one of the largest databases in the world of women's measurements, in 1999 Tanya spun off a sister company, Virtually Yours Inc., which just went into commercial development. Its interactive software allows the online apparel retailer's customers to easily try on clothing on their photo realistic image.

Background

While running a previous dressmaking business for professional women, Tanya, whose background is costume design, was constantly asked to alter patterns that did not fit, so she began searching for software to automate the process. "I've always been intrigued by technology, and someone told me that you can develop anything you can articulate how to do manually. That's when the light bulb went off." When she couldn't find anything appropriate, she began working with engineers at the local technical university and developed the software that led to the start-up of Unique Patterns.

Biggest Challenge

"Shipping is a real issue. For international sales, we've been working on solutions like printing the patterns in other countries or electronically sending the product. We have to think of some new ways, like franchising, to grow in those markets."