

Manitoba spice company seasoned for success

For years, hunters would bring their meat into the Sportsman's Den, a sporting goods store in Swift Current, Saskatchewan. There, co-owner Rod Schwartz would use his exceptional skills—and his equally impressive seasonings—to process the meat into what many described as just about the best jerky anywhere.



Janet and Rod Schwartz, owners of Wild West Seasonings.

It was so good, in fact, that in 1993, Schwartz and his wife Janet abandoned the sporting goods business altogether and moved to Winnipeg to create and sell their seasonings full-time.

Since then, the market for food products created by Wild West Seasonings—the company the couple formed in 1995—has expanded beyond their wildest dreams. From the Winnipeg area, throughout the western provinces and into the United States—it seems they simply can't satisfy the appetite for Wild West's delicious creations.

"It wasn't always easy," says Schwartz. "Right after moving from Swift Current, we'd travel across Manitoba selling our jerky and sausages from the back seat of the car. I would approach sporting goods stores, hardware stores and grocery stores to find a place on their shelves for our products."

Not once, the couple insists, did they have second thoughts about their decision to turn their culinary skills into a business. "Our products always got a great reception so we knew things would work out if we just kept knocking on doors," says Schwartz.

Their confidence was rewarded when their jerky won rave reviews at Manitoba's Red River Exhibition, the Calgary Stampede and Klondike Days in Edmonton.

The next move, south into the United States, east to Ontario and down into Mexico, would prove more challenging. But with financial assistance from Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada's programs and services, Wild West Seasonings was able to participate in trade missions to potential markets like Detroit, Chicago, San Francisco and Texas.

More recently, the Manitoba Rural Adaptation Council helped Wild West identify and cultivate new markets in Mexico. "We had signed a contract to introduce one of our new products, Caesar Pleaser (a dried Clamato cocktail), into restaurants and bars in Mexico," explains Schwartz.

"Unfortunately, that deal fell through. However, thanks to some timely introductions and key meetings, we've made contact with many of the resorts in Mexico as well as some cruise lines."

The Schwartzes know it won't always be clear sailing, but they're confident that once the Mexican market gets a taste of their products, they won't be able to resist coming back for more.

For more information, contact Rod Schwartz, co-owner of Wild West Seasonings, tel.: (204) 992-2104, email: sales@wildwestseasonings.com, website: www.wildwestseasonings.com.

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Corporate espionage: a by-product of today's global economy

In November, an employee of beverage giant Coca-Cola stood trial in a U.S. federal court in Atlanta on charges she stole trade secrets which she hoped to sell to Coke's chief rival, PepsiCo. Two others charged in the case have recently pleaded guilty.

When Pepsi blew the whistle on the foiled plot it set off alarm bells throughout the global business community as corporations everywhere scrambled to check file locks, recheck waste baskets for sensitive documents and rethink the countermeasures used to protect trade secrets from competitors.

"The Coca-Cola episode is certainly not the first or only time in recent years that a corporate giant has found itself ensnared in high-profile corporate intrigue," says Richard Sanders, a Montreal-born partner in Sullivan and Worcester, a law firm in Boston.

And Canadian businesses are not immune to this issue either, says Sanders. A two-year old lawsuit was settled last May when WestJet agreed to pay Air Canada \$15.5 million for using the password of a former Air Canada employee to download detailed and commercially sensitive information from a company website.

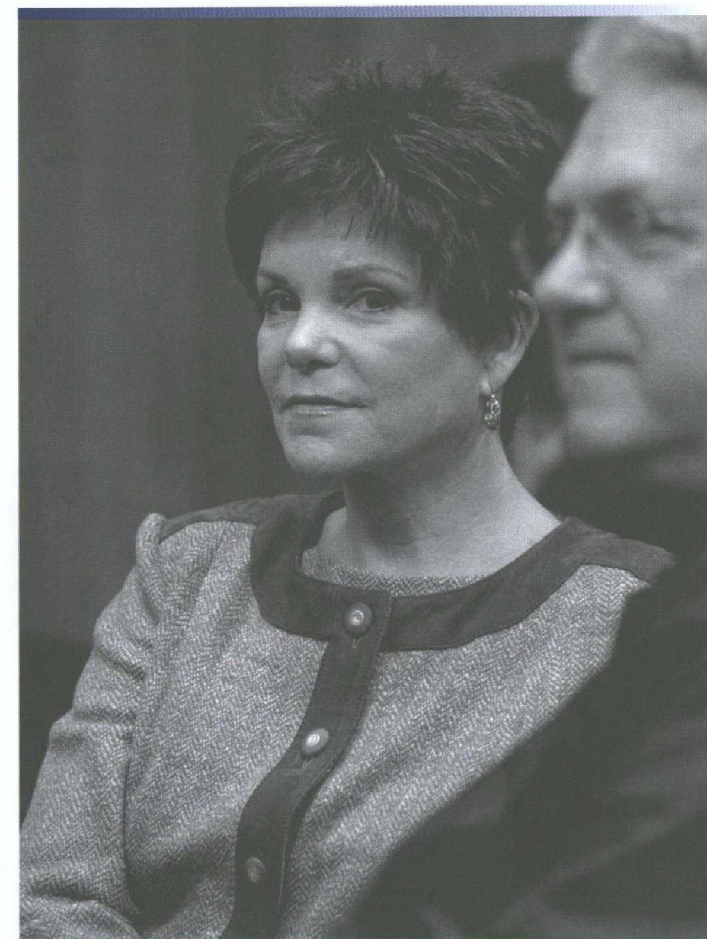
"Corporate espionage is nothing new," says Sanders. "Then, as now, what makes corporate espionage so hard to police is that it can pay so well," he says.

Sanders says American companies spend about \$2.3 billion a year keeping tabs on its competition. A 1999 survey by the American Society of Industrial Security found that U.S. firms had lost some \$50 billion through the theft of proprietary information.

But when asked why corporate espionage is rising these days, Sanders points to a number of reasons.

"First, it's now much easier than ever. Before email and the Internet, corporate espionage was a contact sport. You had to break into factories, rummage through trash or send spy planes overhead to take surveillance photographs of factories. One dumpster-diving London executive was so paranoid about the competition that he rented a garage and wore overalls while personally rifling through trash he collected from his rival each night."

But that's a thing of the past, says Sanders, who adds that laptops are essentially offices in a box. "It is now possible for a person to steal secrets halfway around the world from the comfort of their own office or home."



In November, former Hewlett-Packard chairwoman Patricia Dunn pleaded not guilty to four felony identity theft and fraud charges for allegedly instigating the company's ill-fated spying probe into boardroom leaks.

AP Photo/Paul Sakuma

And the computer has given these virtual corporate safecrackers a dizzying array of new tools of the trade: password crackers, keyboard loggers, spyware and sniffers, which are programs that secretly catch information sent along a company's network.

"The second reason for the rise in corporate espionage is that, like it or not, electronic spying is now much more culturally acceptable because, even when caught, perpetrators do not always pay the full cost of their crimes."

Part of the reason for this nonchalance over corporate espionage is the stiff competition of the global market.

"Fear is a powerful corrosive that can even eat away at ethical standards," says Sanders. "And since staying on the cutting edge is often the difference between life or death for corporations and their employees in this hyper-competitive climate, it is unrealistic

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