

In Montreal you dial 9-1-1. In Medellín you dial 1-2-3. But behind the different emergency numbers lies the same Canadian expertise. Backed by the Canadian Embassy in Bogotá, Positron Public Safety Systems (PPSS) outbid stiff international competition to supply the technology for the first fully integrated Emergency Response System in Latin America.

With over 3000 installations around the world, Montreal-based Positron Inc. (parent company of PPSS) has been providing world-class end-to-end communications systems for emergency call-handling and dispatching for 30 years. The company makes most of its sales outside Canada, mainly to the United States, as well as to countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

In 1997, Positron Inc., a company specializing in the design and manufacture of telecommunications products, created PPSS (with over 240 employees) to take over the development and implementation of 9-1-1 systems.

First Latin American major contract
The Colombian contract, signed in



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April 2000, was the company's first major contract in Latin America. PPSS was mandated to supply a turnkey emergency response solution, including telephony equipment, local area network (LAN), servers, workstations,

"The Ambassador's endorsement was key," says Marcelo Cardoso, Positron's International Director, who also credits the assistance of Commercial Officer Aaron Malka and First Secretary, Commercial, Stéphanie

Canadian firm provides speedy response

Colombia puts call out for "9-1-1"

software applications, and all other related equipment, as well as training.

The multi-functional command and control centre is handling calls for the entire metropolitan area of Medellín, which comprises more than two million residents living in nine municipalities.

Record implementation time

With a team dedicated to implementation, and outstanding project management, Positron had the system up and running in a record 150 days.

The speed is even more impressive given the operational complexity involved. While North American equivalents typically integrate only the call-handling capabilities of three agencies (police, fire and ambulance), the Colombian system is handling both emergency calls and dispatching resources for an additional four agencies — Civil Defence, Investigations Department, Red Cross and Vehicle Traffic Control. Other services are planning to join the centre in the future.

Embassy support

The company benefited from the support provided by the Canadian Embassy in Bogotá. Ambassador Guillermo Rishchynski participated in follow-up meetings with Medellín's Mayor and other city officials.

Allard. "They were very helpful in passing on documentation and providing Canadian official support."

In addition to several local companies, Positron was up against well-respected competitors from the United States, France and Germany.

The bid was put out to tender in December 1999. A year later, the new system, featuring Positron's technology, was formally launched at a reception hosted by the Mayor of Medellín and attended by the Canadian Ambassador, among others.

Contact Canadian posts

Enlisting Embassy help is not new for PPSS, which is registered in the WIN Exports database and has also used Export Development Corporation services. "We usually make contact with the posts first unless we're already established in a country," says Cardoso. "And when preparing for a visit, we check the Web site www.infoexport.gc.ca to see what information the Canadian government can offer us."

Cardoso, in fact, recommends that before going to any new market, companies contact the relevant Canadian post.

Respect different cultures

Positron's International Director has salient advice for training people and implementing services in other

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