

GSA success takes time...and a plan - continued from page 1

A GSA schedule doesn't guarantee any sales. The proposal and negotiation process costs every company a unique combination of time and money, and takes special marketing expertise and careful relationship-building. The top companies have taken 10 or 15 years to build that level of sales, from signing a GSA schedule contract and seeing the first dollars flow, to making a consistent profit.

"In addition to understanding how federal procurement works, relationships are of critical importance, both with GSA contract administrators and federal agency customers," says Mike Boehmer, Director of GSA Sales for Krug. His team managed to turn early difficulties into an advantage.

"GSA believed there were deficiencies in testing data for one of our product lines," he said. "But even though we didn't win that contract, we gained a lot of credibility and respect by being honest and graceful in the way we did things."

Krug went on to foster very good long-term relationships with key senior GSA personnel. "Our GSA business has grown double digits every year since 1995," said Boehmer, whose efforts landed over \$10 million in U.S. government contracts last year.

Use GSA in your marketing

Washington D.C.-based consultant Judy Bradt, a former Canadian trade commissioner and now principal of Summit Insight, points out that a specially-designed marketing campaign to drive GSA sales is key. "You can adapt a marketing campaign from your commercial market with modest expense. Government buyers notice when you tailor your online and print materials to them—and when you don't," she says.

Colin Hung, senior director of business development with Performancesoft in Toronto, agrees. His team

Selling to the U.S. government could be right for you if your company is:

- performing strongly in Canada and selling to U.S. commercial customers;
- already doing business with the Canadian government;
- gaining interest and winning some initial sales from U.S. government buyers; and
- able to invest two to three years of business development efforts.

produces brochures focused on government buyers' needs. "The U.S. government has issues that are unique and do not translate from the commercial world," says Hung, whose company made \$500,000 in U.S. government sales last year.

Many Canadian companies also test the market by subcontracting to American partners with GSA contracts. But Bradt has some reservations about this approach. "Businesses sacrifice margin to a partner who handles much of the cost, work proposal, negotiation and contract administration, but companies must still do their own marketing."

According to Bradt, it's important to look at the bigger picture. "GSA contracts are only one option. In fact, GSA schedules account for only 5% of Canada's over \$1 billion in total U.S. federal contracts in 2005. Those numbers tell the real story; the U.S. government has many ways to buy, and smart vendors learn them all. The next edition of *CanadExport* will take a look at some of the other ways exporters can sell to the U.S. government.

For more information, go to www.gsa.gov, <https://fsstraining.gsa.gov>, www.international.gc.ca/sell2usgov and www.summitinsight.com.

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Fashion initiative promotes benefits of sourcing Canadian

Canadian apparel companies are getting a substantial public relations boost with the debut of *Wear?Canada!*, a marketing initiative aimed at promoting the best of Canadian fashion to the U.S. and abroad.

Created by the Canadian Apparel Federation—the national non-profit association that represents firms involved in every sector of apparel manufacturing and fashion in Canada—the initiative's strategy is to target high-growth sectors like men's and women's tailored clothing, activewear, sportswear, outerwear and intimate apparel, and to execute marketing programs that would drive economic growth, primarily through exports.

Since its launch last year, *Wear?Canada!* programs have run in major markets throughout the U.S., Europe and Asia.

Export-ready fashion firms are supported by *Wear?Canada!* publications, including four sector-specific brochures, outreach events for exhibitors and buyers, trade advertising, and by facilitating numerous exhibitor programs in the U.S. and overseas.

The Canadian Apparel Federation is getting positive feedback from trade officers, plenty of visits to *Wear?Canada!* kiosks and pavilions, website hits, media response and buyer enthusiasm. Recently, in fact, two Canadian companies found U.S. representatives for their products after attending a *Wear?Canada!* event.

"Canadian manufacturers and designers have tripled their successes in the Chicago marketplace through the Canadian Consulate General in Chicago's Apparel Rep Locator, and we are partnering with the Canadian Apparel Federation through the *Wear?Canada!* program to further provide both visibility and increased service to our Canadian clients," says Ann Rosen, Trade Commissioner with the Canadian Consulate General in Chicago.

"Canadian firms have an edge," says Elliot Lifson, president of the Canadian Apparel Federation and vice-chairman of Peerless Clothing. "Our ability to

successfully target niche markets, provide innovative quality products at superb value and our ability to service the customer are unparalleled. In our highly competitive environment, promoting the benefits of sourcing Canadian is vital," maintains Lifson.

Initially, *Wear?Canada!* targeted key U.S. markets and shows like Stylemax Chicago, Lingerie Americas in New York and MAGIC in Las Vegas, but the Canadian Apparel Federation expanded it to other regions around the world, including Japan and Germany.

Canadian Apparel Federation marketing and communications consultant Eileen Melnick McCarthy oversees the *Wear?Canada!* programs and has worked with a number of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada officers in the U.S. and abroad to produce its market-specific programs.

"*Wear?Canada!*, together with Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, is planning a trade mission to Japan in January 2007," says Melnick McCarthy. "Canadian designers and manufacturers know the Japanese market is important and the Canadian Apparel Federation recently completed a brochure promoting export-ready firms to the Japanese retail sector."

As a precursor to the trade mission, the federation is hosting a series of seminars in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver in November on best practices for entering the Japanese market.

For more information, contact Eileen Melnick McCarthy, Canadian Apparel Federation, tel.: (613) 231-3220, email: emelnick@apparel.ca, website: www.wearcanada.ca.



Canadian designer Arthur Mendonça, who has been compared to Gucci's Tom Ford, is one of Canada's rising fashion stars.

Upcoming Wear?Canada! Events

- **Japan Trade Mission** (January 2007)
- **Munich's ISPO Pavilion** (February 4-7, 2007)
- **Las Vegas MAGIC** (February 13-16, 2007)
- **POOL Pavilion** (February 14-16, 2007)
- **New York's Lingerie Americas** (February 11-13, 2007)
- **Stylemax Chicago** (March 24-27, 2007)



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