

cle. The second, and the more fundamental question, is for a different and much broader forum taking place across Canada today.

Canada has a history of achievement in the development of communication technologies, and so it is well-placed to communicate its ideas further and faster. It has been, by far, the world's most wired society. It was one of the first to launch and tap into the power of satellites. Northern Telecom has set international standards in communications research and innovation. And in recent years New Brunswick's sophisticated high-tech infrastructure has become a kind of Mecca for technology planners from all over the world. In addition, Canada has achieved an impressive profile in creating content for knowledge-driven industries. Its software producers from Corel to Delrina have been major international players; it is the world's second largest exporter of television programming; it has developed a sophisticated, knowledge-based workforce.

However, as important as technology is — even crucial to any strategy — it is the values and the information that will set Canada apart: its geography, its multiculturalism, its civility, and its tolerance. Whether these values are real or only perceived, they are the building blocks for any communications strategy.

Given its success in the development of information technology and its history of peacekeeping and mediation in significant international negotiations, some say the new post-Cold War landscape is ready-made for Canada to flex its soft power muscle. But, so far, its advantages have been relatively ineffective in maximizing this power. Now, there are signs the government recognizes the untapped potential. This summer the federal government announced it wants to launch a new international communications strategy. This article is one outsider's attempt to set out some initial opening moves, to indicate a few directions we might follow, and, finally, to point out some of the bumps we'll be facing along the way. I will advocate a content-driven, multi-platformed, and layered strategy that targets regions and emphasizes open access to information.

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Beginning at the Beginning

Canada wants to show off. It wants to strut its stuff on the world stage. It wants to project an identity that will enhance our already well-respected international reputation, boost our industries, help some of our neighbours to democratize and, maybe, at the same time, help to reinforce our own sense of ourselves back in Canada. We want profile. We want people to listen and watch who we are, what we are doing, and what we can do.

At the same time, as Canadians, we have neither the money nor the temperament to do it in the "American way" and just shout it out louder than anyone else. We be modest folk, and the medium must fit the message.