

Young Edmonton Company Gets Local Help on Road to First Export Sale

Making the first sale in world markets often takes months — even years — of preparation. For *Fiberex Glass Corporation*, it all happened in a matter of days, thanks to expert advice from the International Trade Centre in Edmonton.

As the only wholly Canadian-owned manufacturer of glass fibres for use in reinforcing plastics, *Fiberex* had received occasional inquiries through trade magazines and the Internet.

"One such inquiry came last October from a company in South Africa," recalls *Fiberex* CEO and Chairman Fred Atiq.

"As with other inquiries," he adds, "we sent information about our product, flew in samples, and talked price over the phone. But it stopped there."

Enter the local ITC

Incorporated only two years ago, the young manufacturer started up production in a \$20-million plant just outside of Edmonton last November, shortly after the South African inquiry.

"The news of our new plant also reached a very proactive Trade Commissioner, Marilyn Wilson, at the ITC in Edmonton, who gave us a call," says Atiq.

"We followed up with a meeting," he adds, "where she told us all about how the Government could assist us with exporting, and helped us fill out an application under the Program for Export Market Development (PEMD)."

Fiberex was successful in its PEMD application, and with that financial help made a trip to see

"its" company in South Africa in early December.

PEMD made the difference

Atiq spent five days in South Africa, making presentations about his product and having the prospective buyer try it out.

"Then we sat down and negotiated about the price, eventually coming away with a \$1.8-million deal — ongoing estimated value — over one year," says a happy Atiq.

So what made the difference in the face of stiff competition from large international companies?

"Our customer liked our personalized service," Atiq says, "and was very impressed that we came half way around the world to negotiate face-to-face.

"But if it wasn't for PEMD," he adds, "we would still be negotiating from a distance. And you know how effective that can be!"

A growing market

While in South Africa, Atiq also made contact with four other companies.

"But the product first has to be tested and checked out," he admits, "before any sales prospects. That's where developing a personal relationship can make all the difference," he adds, "giving you an advantage over competitors

who are perhaps not willing to make that extra effort."

And he certainly found the South African market worth the extra effort.

"It's a very interesting and buoyant market," he says, "and you can sense that it's a new South Africa, where most companies are very appreciative of your taking the extra effort to come and deal face-to-face. It makes a big difference."

Expanding markets

Since his success in South Africa, Atiq has gone back to "his" ITC in Edmonton and Marilyn Wilson, who is helping him develop a marketing plan for other markets — South America, Europe and the United States.

"She also helped us get on the WIN Exports database," he says, "which will make our product known to Canadian Trade Commissioners around the world."

As a matter of fact, just last month *Fiberex* got its first order south of the border, and is following up on contacts made there after attending a U.S. trade show last October.

For more information on *Fiberex Glass Corporation*, contact CEO and Chairman Fred Atiq, tel.: (403) 980-1300, fax: (403) 980-1330.