

**W**hen you introduce a product made from the purest, most intriguing source of water on the planet, attracting international interest is not a problem. But as Canadian Iceberg Vodka Corporation discovered, finding reliable distributors is another story; however, the company has found another valuable resource in Team Canada Inc. Company President Gary Pollack is pleased to share his tips.

Newfoundland-based Canadian Iceberg Vodka Corporation has been commercially harvesting icebergs in "Iceberg Alley," off the island's north-east coast, since May 1995. The icebergs, chunks that have broken away from the main glacial body near Greenland, are picked up in massive nets by the company's harvesting ships and placed in the ships' holds.

The iceberg water — so pure that contaminants are undetectable in parts per quadrillion — is shipped to the Newfoundland Liquor Corporation (NLC), which blends it with triple-distilled neutral grain spirits produced from Ontario sweet corn. The result is Canadian Iceberg Vodka, an international award-winning spirit that is the brainchild of Gary Pollack.

"During the Gulf War, someone jokingly suggested that with all the icebergs we have, we could harvest them and send the water to Saudi Arabia," Pollack explains. "At first I laughed, then I realized the idea wasn't ridiculous at all." Unable to obtain financing to produce iceberg water, Pollack contacted the NLC, which was willing to bottle iceberg vodka.

#### Distributors come knocking

After introducing the spirit at the annual First Ministers' conference in St. John's in 1995, the company landed a U.S. distributor and a Canadian agent. However, the distributor turned out to be a distribution centre and charged Iceberg Vodka an expensive fee to back out of the agreement.

Pollack has salient advice for other exporters: "Ask for copies of their financial statements. Ask for references from other companies they're repre-

senting. Don't get stuck with someone who's all talk and no action."

He also recommends tapping into government resources. The company has used Export Development Corporation (EDC) services and, in October 1999,

*The tip of the iceberg*

# Vodka exports flow

received Program for Export Market Development (PEMD) funding, which allowed Pollack to attend ANUGA, the world's biggest food and beverage show, in Cologne, Germany.

#### Face-to-face brings results

Meeting with potential distributors is not the sole reason to attend trade shows. "The other big advantage is that you get to meet the trade commissioners," notes Pollack, "which makes it easier when you're sending e-mails." The company keeps in frequent contact with posts in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Middle East, and Scandinavia, receiving market information, lists of distributors, as well as advice on shows Pollack should attend. Leads from commercial officers have also led to recent agreements with distributors in Iceland, Israel and Switzerland.

#### Communication is key

Pollack also stresses the importance of including translators in company booths at foreign shows. "If you're going into foreign markets, you need to have someone who speaks the language. It's very important to be able to communicate in the language of the place you're going."

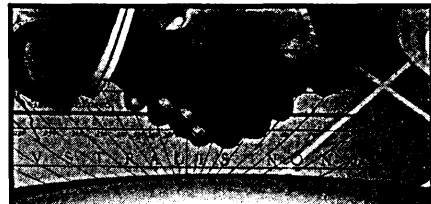
Iceberg Vodka, with six full-time employees and 25-30 seasonal harvesters and bottlers, exports to Japan and Ukraine. In addition to its current push into Europe, the company anticipates sales from participation in the February 2001 Team Canada trade mission to Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong.

The company is branching out in product as well as market. Canada's Original Iceberg Water, 90% of which is destined for exports through the company's current distributors, is expected to be on the market by 2001.

Pollack has good reason to be confident in his unique vodka. Nevertheless, he stresses: "The only way a company like ours can grow is through exports and through the support of the Canadian export development programs."

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