

ELEMENTS OF AN EXPORT MARKETING STRATEGY:

General "Software Products" as a sector is relatively new to the international community. As the individual products infiltrate so many diverse communities a "sector" marketing strategy is a challenge. In reality the sector is a series of sub-sectors providing solutions to totally different industry/business/social sectors but joined by a fraternity of software engineers. Apart from the science of software this fraternity is connected by the similar problems of a lack of business acumen, marketing knowhow and growth financing.

A study of Canadian software product success stories investigated the experiences of Canadian software companies entering the USA comparing the marketing strategy of successful firms versus the less successful. A major conclusion of the study was that the greater the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) made by the Canadian company in the target market, the greater the success. It also identified that the earlier the FDI appeared in the marketing strategy the greater the success. Although drawn from the USA market experience, this philosophy can be applied to most international markets. Traditionally Canadian exporters are inclined, and most often advised, to spend some time within the target market area using distributors, dealers, VARS, direct sales etc., (gaining experience) before considering an FDI. Considering the study's conclusions, this strategy should be reviewed.

Profile: Canada's international profile for the software sector varies from country to country but could be improved in all markets. New initiatives are required to raise international awareness of Canadian solutions. Since so much Canadian software is directed at vertical markets in other sectors (eg. mining, energy), we need to give more attention to promoting these products in promotional events for those sectors. Apart from seeking new initiatives there are existing international events that can be exploited for this purpose. Annual international events such as the CeBIT Trade Fair in Hannover, Germany each March, the CeNIT Fair in Hong Kong each Fall and the Spring and Fall COMDEX Fairs in the USA are excellent vehicles for promotion. Special upcoming events such as the Information Technologies Association of Canada's (ITAC), Softworld 93, planned for September 93 and the option of being the Featured Country at COMDEX Spring in Atlanta, May 93 and the Partner Country at CeBIT in March 1994 offer excellent opportunities to boost Canada's profile.