Ireland

In July 1999, the Irish government outlined the National Development Plan 2000-2006 (NDP). Protection of the environment is one of the goals of the NDP and over $4.8 billion will be invested in water and wastewater services, $1.3 billion in waste management facilities, and $52 million is allocated for environmental research. The financial provision will fund 82 major water and wastewater projects as well as over 60 large waste management projects. The main driving forces have been a constant stream of directives from the European Commission, the need to comply with those regulatory requirements and to meet the needs of a buoyant economy and rising population.

Refuse Incinerators and Wastewater Treatment and Purification Plants: There are tenders for construction and management of refuse incinerators, wastewater treatment, and purification plants. Opportunities exist for Canadian firms with expertise in "clean" incineration technologies or filtering emissions, and in safe conversion of waste into energy. The need for wastewater treatment facilities can also provide significant potential for entry into the Irish environmental market. A small market for greywater recycling technologies is emerging, and water purification plants are in demand.

Environmental Consultancy Services: Expert environmental consultancy services or innovative products and services that support legally mandated environmental objectives cost effectively.

Control of Airborne Pollutants: There is a possibility of further investment in clean transportation technologies and mass transit. The control of emissions from energy generation will likely require conversion of generating stations to natural gas from oil or coal, pollution abatement measures (e.g., flue gas desulphurization), and increased use of sustainable sources of power (e.g., wind turbines).

Solid Waste Disposal: Waste management consulting, new waste disposal facilities (landfills and incinerators), recycling programs and remediation of old landfill sites.

Indirect Market Opportunities: Environmental awareness and education programs; monitoring systems; policy consulting services; solutions to problems such as illegal dumping; energy efficient or low waste methods and materials for construction and manufacturing, and consultants for new pollution management solutions such as emissions trading.

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The Nordics

The Nordic countries–Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland–all share a commitment to the pursuit of a cleaner environment. This offers great export and research collaboration opportunities in areas such as hydrogen and fuel cells; soil remediation; water treatment; waste management; and bio, wind and geothermal energies.

The drive for cleaner technology in industrial processes and new solutions for waste management is at the core of Nordic thinking. Green City Denmark and a similar program now under development in Norway demonstrate the importance of environmental technologies in Nordic society.

Renewable energy sources like wind, hydro, biomass, geothermal and district heating, contribute to an increasing share of the Nordic energy supply. Hydrogen and wave power projects are also taking off. For instance, Sweden is participating in the CUTE (Clean Urban Transportation Europe) hydrogen project, Iceland has a clear strategy to move towards a hydrogen economy, while Hydro Norway has a wind and hydrogen demonstration project on Utsira island.

With current legislation prohibiting the landfill of household waste, Denmark and Sweden have witnessed an increased effort towards alternatives in waste management, such as recycling and waste-to-energy production through incineration, as well as biomass-to-energy production. Biomass is also widely used in Finland and wood-based fuels constitute an important contribution to meeting Kyoto targets in both Finland and Sweden. Soil remediation is another area where the Nordics share common ground, and where Canadian-Nordic partnerships already exist.

The Nordic emphasis on cleaner technology products and processes offers a market for innovative environmental solutions. Furthermore, through public and private funding in the pursuit for a cleaner environment, the Nordic environmental industries also serve as a gateway to a broad industrial contact base in Central and Eastern Europe.

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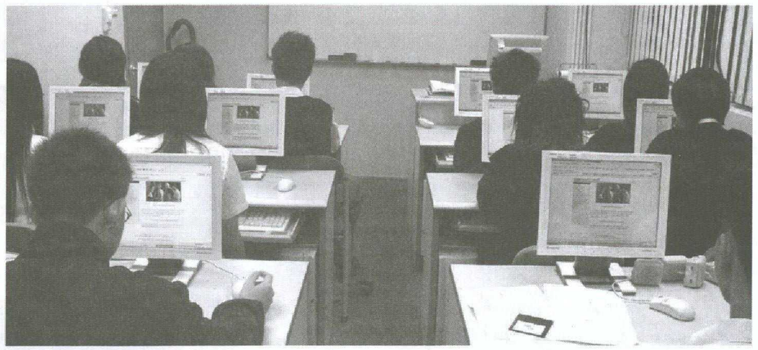
Learning the language

Greenwood Canada finds success in Hong Kong



Recently, Greenwood Canada's English as a second language (ESL) software was selected by the Hong Kong Travel and Tourism Training Centre (HKTT), the only authorized training centre for the International Air Transport Association in Hong Kong.

Founded in 1994, Greenwood Canada specializes in ESL learning software for students in Canada, the U.S., Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and China. Greenwood started looking into the export market in 1996, and the company focused on the Japanese and Hong Kong markets.

"The HKTT started a pilot program using Greenwood software in the summer of 2004," says Patrick Chun, CEO of Greenwood Canada. "The system was thoroughly tested by HKTT's instructors, and was soon adopted for wide-scale use at their training centres. There are currently 11 English classes with more than 300 students subscribing to Greenwood."

According to Chun, competition in exporting educational software into Asia has always been fierce. He points out that the Internet boom and bust in the late 1990s made marketing e-learning even harder as many people doubted its effectiveness. "There were many e-learning companies popping up during that period, so it took a lot longer for potential customers to sort through the choices and finally identify Greenwood as the most suitable provider for ESL e-learning," says Chun.

Of course, it's no secret why Hong Kong is a popular choice for Canadian companies to establish a presence in Asia: it serves as springboard to the massive Chinese market, and Hong Kong and Canadian businesses have many common business practices. But, many international competitors have the same idea, and the competition there proves it.

"I think the maturity and stability of Greenwood's software proved to be the winning element in this case," says Chun. "Also, the value of our local partner can't be understated. Without Hong Kong-based United Asia Technology's local, on-the-ground coordination, communication with the client would have been next to impossible," he adds.

Chun also sites the help his company received from officers at the Canadian Consulate in Hong Kong as very effective, without which the sourcing of local partners and clients would not have materialized. "Local officers at the Consulate have the insights that a company based in Canada would never have," says Chun.

Market penetration

Deciding to target the Asian market is one thing, but actually establishing a foothold is quite another. Chun mentions that the Greenwood team travels overseas frequently, as "face time" with prospective partners and clients is very important.

Chun recounts a time when he had to travel from Vancouver to Japan for just a half-hour meeting. "It was my physical presence that distinguished the company's commitment, and that built confidence," he says. Given that Greenwood's marketing strategy concentrated on Asian markets, one may think that the cultural and business barriers throughout Asia would be similar and therefore require a similar marketing strategy. "Not so," adds Chun. "From experience, regions within Asia can be drastically different. A single approach to a marketing plan would be, at best, ineffective, but more probably, offensive," he states.

Looking to Greenwood's future, the prospects for further development are excellent. The company is exploring possible partnerships with Canadian textbook publishers to deliver a blended learning approach where a mix of books and software are used in the classroom.

Advice

"For prospective exporters, a visit to the Virtual Trade Commissioner Web site is highly recommended,"says Chun. Connecting with International Trade Canada's overseas trade officers can open up new markets for Canadian exporters. After all, experienced and novice exporters know that tackling a new market is never easy. Certainly, the Greenwood team has learned the value of patience and persistence. "In order to succeed, fail and fail early," recommends Chun, "so that you can learn and move forward before it gets too costly."

For more information, go to www.infoexport.gc.ca and www.greenwood.ca.