

New Brunswick Telecom Company Makes Successful Link in the U.K.

In a move that will open doors to the rest of the world, NBTel Global Inc. has joined forces with British Telecom (BT) to share best practice and knowledge in government on-line services across the Atlantic.

The new business relationship is a true model of NBTel Global's LivingLAB™ innovations environment, where a product is researched and developed first in New Brunswick and then exported to global markets.

With the United Kingdom ranking second in Europe (after Germany) in information and communications technology (ICT) — and a gateway to the rest of Europe and Asia — the BT deal represents a major coup for the Saint-John-based company of just over 100 employees. Specializing in software development and consulting for electronic service delivery (ESD) solutions, NBTel Global is a wholly owned subsidiary of Aliant — a growth company formed last March by combining the four major ICT and provincial telecommunication firms in Atlantic Canada.

The agreement — initially signed in July — has since become a one-year renewable contract. "We've had one of our consultants working over there for the past two months," says Rick LeBlanc, Director of Sales at NBTel Global. During that period, the company prioritized five opportunities with BT. "We've now moved on to assisting them in their evaluation of how our electronic government

services can fit into their current environment," adds LeBlanc.

A market of opportunities

An expert on prospects in the region for Canadian information and technology firms is George Edwards, Senior Commercial Officer at the Canadian High Commission in Britain.

"With the Internet now representing about 20 per cent of BT's local call traffic and with data volume already exceeding voice across its network in the U.K., Internet-related opportunities abound here," says Edwards. "Interactive digital television services, which are just being launched, are hungry for content and have already attracted about 1.5 million users."

Education and training requirements across all ages — including adult retraining — have seen a corresponding surge. "Over \$2 billion has been earmarked by the British government to connect schools and libraries to the Internet and to train teachers in the use of ICT," adds Edwards. "Although the U.K. has some excellent suppliers of education and training software, there are real opportunities for Canadian companies."

The explosion of growth in Internet use began with the launch by Dixons,

the leading U.K. retailer, of the first subscription-free Internet service in September 1998. It was right around that time that George Edwards first hooked up NBTel Global with BT, setting the wheels in motion for a deal the following year.

Trade Commissioner help invaluable

"Just after meeting Rick LeBlanc and his colleagues at NBTel Global while on a trip to New Brunswick, I attended a presentation in St. John's by British Telecom Scotland about the use of ICT in government," explains Edwards. "Afterwards, I suggested to the BT representative that he look into NBTel Global's considerable expertise in electronic delivery of government services. Rick then enthusiastically took up the challenge of convincing BT that his company had something BT needed."

The result, many discussions and visits later, was this exciting new contract.

"Our work with the government of New Brunswick allowed us to develop these technologies which we're pleased to be sharing with our industry colleagues in the United Kingdom," says LeBlanc.

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