

SHARING TRADE SECRETS

KNOCKING ON DOORS IN INDIA — *Continued from page 2*

finalized a partnership agreement with one Indian company."

The company also gained a greater knowledge of the Indian economy and discovered that many local companies now have obtained, or are in the process of obtaining, ISO-9000 quality standards accreditation.

According to Jeyanayagam, this gives Canadian companies greater confidence in dealing with their Indian counterparts who now subscribe to the same standards generally accepted in North America and Europe.

Chalmers also made good contacts -- to be followed up at a later date -- in the other three countries visited.

"In addition to being part of Team Canada," says Jeyanayagam, "we have also secured a Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) grant on market feasibility activities to help us find the right manufacturer in India."

Indian potential

With 60 per cent of the 25-year old company's exports going to the U.S.A., what prompted Chalmers to look all the way to India?

It was company restructuring in 1992 that led Chalmers to focus more heavily on overseas markets.

"India represents a huge potential market for us," says a confident Jeyanayagam, "with close to a billion people, and from there we could move into

China."

He also points out that with recent changes in India, foreign investors are now allowed to own over 51 per cent share in an Indian company.

"Our first priority now," he says, "is to set up a joint venture and then concentrate on marketing our product."

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Company strength

The unique, patented, rubber spring design suspension systems have proven so popular in all vocations of the truck and trailer business that they are now used in other applications such as dump, van, tank, refuse, logging and sweepers.

In addition to having become the number one supplier of suspensions for the sweeper vehicle industry, Chalmers' research allowed it to make inroads in the ready mix, oil field, and airport refuelling markets.

These markets include Europe, the Middle East (oil rigs in Kuwait), New Zealand and Australia -- which now accounts for close to three per cent of exports since opening there last year alone.

The 1992 company restructuring -- increased efficiency and higher cost-effectiveness -- saw annual sales jump by 35 per cent, from \$3 million in 1992 (a staff of 25) to \$8 million in 1995 (a staff of still only 31),

making it a 1995 finalist in the *Financial Post's* top 50 best-managed all-Canadian companies.

As Jeyanayagam put it, "We are totally dedicated to providing top quality product and class 'A' customer service."

The company's goal is to become a \$10 million corporation in two years, mainly by increased international business.

"For us, or any company for that matter, to achieve this

goal," Jeyanayagam advises, "we need first of all a lot of patience, hard work, country visits two or three times a year, and a local agent who is trustworthy and who can not only set up local operations, but help us move faster than the competition."

Other key success factors Chalmers lives by include: encouraging innovation and excellence; being responsive to customers' needs; expanding customer base to create a strong repeat business; developing and maintaining partnership relations with key customers and suppliers; and creating solid niche markets.

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