

# SHARING TRADE SECRETS

## Calgary Software Company Plunges into World Markets



*With about half of its 300 clients in the United States, Calgary-based QMASTER Software Solutions Inc. is ready to tackle the European market...and beyond.*

This small (12 employees) but growing management application company — scheduling, distributing, printing and managing processes and output — started selling seriously south of the border in 1992, only two years after it was launched.

So why did it choose the United States as its first export destination?

"That's the closest and largest market," replies QMASTER's Director of Marketing Darlene Sheldon, "and the one offering the greatest potential."

**The Road to the United States**  
Before embarking on the road to exports, the company consulted the International Trade Centre (ITC) in Calgary.

"The Trade Commissioner there," recalls Sheldon, "helped us put together an export package — including advice on documentation, how to ship products, and general pointers on marketing."

QMASTER also contacted the Commercial Sections of the Canadian Embassy in Washington and Consulate General in Boston, but it made most of the direct contacts in the United States on its own.

"Our leading edge product is so highly specialized," says Sheldon, "and cuts through various fields, so finding the right contacts is a little trickier."

In any case, with the Canadian help and through much private investigating, the company is now

selling across 48 states, making the United States the destination of some 50 per cent of its exports.

Another very useful way the company found for developing contacts is by attending trade shows thanks in part to some PEMD (Programme for Export Market Development) assistance from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT).

**Tapping into Europe...and beyond**

QMASTER's venture into Europe also started in Calgary during one of the one-on-one Export Vision and Outreach programs organized by DFAIT. Under these programs, Trade Commissioners and Commercial Officers from various Canadian missions abroad periodically return to Canada to meet prospective exporters interested in their region.

"That's how we met Canadian Commercial Officers posted in the United Kingdom, France and Sweden," says Sheldon, "and they advised us on possible distributorships in their respective territories."

As a result, the company recently signed such agreements in the United Kingdom and Sweden, and is in the midst of final negotiations in France, while investigating similar possibilities in Germany.

"These Canadian Commercial Officers helped us tremendously,

ly," says Sheldon, who recalls that after the first distributor signed up in England went out of business, the Canadian trade official in London helped her find a substitute "in record time."

As an added bonus, QMASTER's new U.K. distributor will also help market and support the Canadian company's products in Australia, Malaysia and Singapore.

**Perseverance Key**

"It is important to make frequent visits to potential markets," advises Sheldon, "and to put a face to your contacts."

"And if you don't succeed at first, persevere and don't give up," she adds, "because all of a sudden there may just be a need for your product."

Another piece of advice is to stay in constant touch with your distributors, by E-mail, phone and visits — "because they have to be managed."

"Even before you start, get all the advice you can," she recommends. "Contact your local ITC, get on the WIN Exports data base, subscribe to *CanadExport*, be visible on the Internet, apply for assistance through various export programs and participate in trade shows."

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