

simple," says Gordon West, who, with his wife, Lisa, is the sole owner of **WaterSpring Bed Company Inc.** "For instance, our softside mattress looks and acts identically to any normal mattress, but with all the benefits of a waterbed. Unlike conventional waterbeds, our product can fit into a bedframe of the customer's choice. As well, our product contains only about 20 percent of the water used in a conventional waterbed, and eliminates the need for a heater because we use a thermal barrier material that reflects body heat. For customers who want the experience of a waterbed without the price, we have the *AquaPad*. It's made up of a thin vinyl mattress with two inches of water in it, covered by a quilted panel. It fits over your regular mattress."

The products' global popularity encouraged West to expand his operations. Three years ago, **WaterSpring** employed 15 people. Today, it employs 60.

The reasons behind his company's success have become a mantra for West. "You have to do everything right. You have to have the best quality and design. You have to understand your foreign markets, and make it as easy as possible for them to purchase from you," he said. "You also have to be surrounded by the best people. You have to build credibility with your customers, which takes years. You have to be technologically innovative. And finally, you have to implement an efficient and clean manufacturing process."

While pursuing new export markets, **WaterSpring** has made full use of federal government programs, says West. "We've used funds from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade's Program for Export Market Development to help us attend international trade shows, federal funds to incorporate ISO 9000 standards, and the Export Development Corporation for a number of different ventures," he said.

Though the waterbed side of the market plays a major role in **WaterSpring's** export sales, West says his company, far from being complacent with its current success, is exploring new products, markets and opportunities.

"We've just introduced a mattress pad that provides heat without using electricity," he said. "On one side, it provides 12° F more heat than on the other side, thanks to a special fabric we've invented and patented. This product is designed to bring heat to every sleeping surface in the world for a very low cost. It will revolutionize sleep!"

EDC – Financial Solutions for Canadian Business

EDC is a customer-driven, financial services corporation that has been dedicated during the past 50 years to helping Canadian business succeed in the global marketplace by providing a wide range of flexible and innovative financial solutions to exporters and their global customers.

EDC's risk management services — including insurance, financing and guarantees — have become an integral part of the export strategies of large and small Canadian companies. The Corporation is committed to building long-term relationships, with its customers and partners.

EDC encourages the growth of small- and medium-sized enterprises and helps create and sustain jobs through its support to exporters and their worldwide buyers.

WESTERN STAR TRUCKS

Bold new strategies and offshore outlook pay off for Kelowna, B.C., manufacturer.

A bold new marketing strategy has paid off for **Western Star Trucks** of Kelowna, B.C.. In 1991, this manufacturer of fully-customized, heavy-duty trucks and tractors took a hard look at where its exports were headed — primarily to the United States — and decided to aggressively pursue expansion to offshore markets.

"We wanted to minimize our dependence on the cyclical, volatile, high discount North American market," said Terry Peabody, President of **Western Star**, which was founded in 1967. "To ensure our success, we custom designed trucks for the offshore market. For instance, for our Australian and SouthEast Asian customers, we built right-hand-drive trucks. We realized that we couldn't just sell our North American trucks to our foreign clientele — we had to meet their unique needs."

Western Star's deliberate exporting shift and dedication to its clientele have paid off. In 1993, the company's export sales increased by 77 percent over 1992, from \$81 million (Cdn) to \$144 million. And compared to 1991's export sales of \$53 million, 1993's sales were an impressive 172 percent higher. **Western Star's** success has translated into jobs as well. In 1993, 860 Canadians were employed by the company, an increase of 87 percent from 1992, and 158 percent from 1991.

Though the United States is still **Western Star's** largest export destination, the company also sells its trucks and tractors to Australia, SouthEast Asia, Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Zambia, and the Middle East, to name only a few. **Western Star's** vehicles are used for general service purposes as well as for such speciality applications as logging, mining and construction.

Plotting the company's future exporting success was an exacting process, said Peabody. "We decided to expand beyond our primary North American market by offering fully-customized speciality vehicles for heavy duty and more hostile environment applications that weren't being satisfied by our major American, Japanese and European competitors. This meant establishing an international sales unit in Kelowna, as well as setting up a network of sales representatives around the globe. At the same time, we assessed the most lucrative market opportunities, especially in resource-based countries. We also dedicated staff to work specifically on meeting the individual needs of our offshore clients."

Peabody also credits the federal government for promoting **Western Star**. "We've participated in many government-sponsored fact-finding missions and trade shows, and found that they've helped us to make contacts and discover new business opportunities," he said.