

“People are the key factor in international business. You have to have the right people who know what they are talking about and who can relate to the buyer. So much of your business depends on good people. You may have the best widget in town and all the razamatazz that goes behind it but if you don’t have the right people you won’t do the business.”

For some of the newer companies, these management strengths were boosted by the leadership provided by their founders. For example, Dicon Systems Limited’s success has a lot to do with the chief executive officer’s management style. Shaver Poultry Breeding Farms Limited benefitted from its founder’s dedication and enthusiasm for poultry breeding and the skills he developed in breeding genetics. I.S.E. International Submarine Engineering Ltd’s very existence and its position as the world leader in designing and building remotely-operated submersibles is due to the driving force and vision of its founder, James MacFarlane.

An export consciousness on the part of the founder was also important. Abraham Mears, vice-president and general manager of Intalite Inc., stated that “the motivating force” behind his company’s exporting operations has been Mr. Stanley Diamond, co-owner and one of the

founders of the organization. Mr. Diamond, general manager until 1968 and since then director of international marketing, told how during the early days of the company, he was able to leave the day-to-day administration to his partner and concentrate on international marketing. This meant that

“My credibility and sincerity were always there and apparent. And it’s not only important to have a title, it’s important how you use that title and how you respond to the marketplace . . . I have conveyed to our distributors, without telling them in so many words but by actions, that I am their representative at the home office. I’m on their team. I’m working with them to help them be successful.”

Management ability is clearly seen in the case of Versatile Farm Equipment, a company that has survived in the agricultural equipment industry while much larger competitors have been brought to their knees. For Versatile, management skills have resulted in strategies of “nichemanship,” product differentiation and cost-cutting (see Profile 1).

The work force

Other companies saw their major people strengths as being in the work force, either on the production