



**Cathy Rose**

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Year Founded: 1982

Employees: 10

Export Sales: 10%

Years Exporting: 3

Export Markets: United States, Egypt, Singapore

*“Export development is a long-term investment — as much as 10 follow-ups before you do some business.”*

**Business Description:**

Cathy established Creative Esthetics Dental Lab Inc. as a manufacturer of custom-made orthodontic, prosthetic, crown and bridge dental appliances. Boasting a range of over 120 different products, her company was the first dental laboratory in Canada to establish a presence on the Internet, which has opened export doors. Research and development is also an important component of the business, with current projects including new technologies in sleep apnea and implant appliances and procedures.

**Exporting Tactics:**

With an international presence established via the Internet, attending trade missions was the next step in Cathy's export strategy. Participating in the Team Canada Atlantic trade mission to Boston in February 2001, landed the company a substantial contract.

Cathy also made extensive use of the Trade Commissioner Service before she joined the 1999 Team Canada trade mission to Ireland, to pursue that country's potential. "They sent me all kinds of information — from a directory that one of the staff picked up at a local dental show, to enrolling me in a special dental program that was taking place during my stay. I met a lot of potential clients through their contacts."

Cathy also keeps up-to-date with ongoing trade events by way of her province's Senior Trade Commissioner at the International Trade Centre. "I find all the local Trade Commissioners very knowledgeable, and they contact me every time there's an event going on — it's the advantage of living in a small province."

**Networking Strategy:**

"My contacts in Boston have developed into ongoing relationships. I have also kept in touch with the people I met in Ireland. They're keen on doing business; at my end, it's just a matter of overcoming the prohibitive shipping costs."

Nominated to the Small-and-Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) Advisory Board for International Trade that reports to the Honourable Pierre Pettigrew, Minister for International Trade, Cathy continues to develop her exporting network. She meets with other board members twice a year to provide feedback on the existing programs and services offered by the Department of Foreign Affairs & International

Trade and to serve as a forum for testing new initiatives. "It's a great networking group. I was part of a Federal task force about eight years ago as well, and I found all the contacts I made very beneficial."

**Export Tip:**

Trade Commissioners and government offices provide excellent support and open doors. But Cathy emphasizes that potential exporters should also do their own homework.

► "Whatever contacts are made for you, be sure to follow up with them both before and after your visit. With export development, you're probably looking at eight to ten follow-ups before you actually do some business. It's a long-term investment."

**Future Plans:**

These involve expanding in the south, ideally Barbados — for personal and business reasons. "I have a colleague in California who recently opened a lab in Hawaii, so if she can do it, so can I." Cathy would also like to establish an international lab consulting business.



**Debra Donovan**

President & CEO  
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Year Founded: 1996

Employees: 7

Export Sales: 20%

Years Exporting: 3

Export Markets: United States

*“If you are set up properly, expanding to another country is not a big stretch.”*

**Business Description:**

Formulating a business plan based on extensive research, Debra — previously a management accountant — along with her partner, Terry MacPhee, purchased an 80-acre former slate quarry and jumped into the challenge of "reawakening an old industry" by starting Scotia Slate Products Ltd. Offering an alternative to concrete, brick, ceramic and wood, her quarry's high-quality and unique multi-colour slate is used in everything from flooring and fireplaces to pool coping and patios. Debra initially focused on the landscaping market, then custom flooring, and is now looking at product development to expand into honed slate surfaces next year.

**Exporting Tactics:**

Because of her province's proximity to the U.S. Eastern Seaboard, Debra targeted that market initially. "The demographics there make sense in terms of construction growth in our niche market of high-end renovation materials." Other advantages include the same language, established transportation lines and the exchange rate.

To prepare for exporting, she participated in a NEBS (New Exporters to Border States) mission, which was "a good training exercise that provided information about logistics, packaging, brokerage and tariffs." When she was ready to start selling, Debra joined the Team Canada Atlantic mission, 2001 to Atlanta and the Team Canada Atlantic mission, 2002 to New York, which she found very useful. "The

introductions by our government to contacts give you credibility going through the door. And with all the logistics pre-arranged, you can schedule many appointments and maximize your marketing efficiency."

**Networking Strategy:**

Debra also uses her time in trade missions to network with other participants from her area. She finds the services of the Trade Commissioner Service "invaluable" in terms of research and cost-savings. They recently saved her from taking a fruitless trip to Europe to check out a potential new customer. And she uses Canadian Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC) to link up with complementary companies for mutual marketing benefit. The bottom line? "You can never drop networking. If you try to do business without networking, you won't be in business very long." Debra expands her networking into the community because it's important for her to give back. As the first Director of the Atlantic Canada Dimension Stone Association, she is helping to educate consumers about her growing industry in the Atlantic Provinces to raise the profile so that it can grow globally.

**Greatest Challenge:**

For Debra, it was the cost of marketing abroad. "But having the right market intelligence before you go will help." And even though the stone industry is typically a man's world, Debra feels she's been treated fairly. "Curiosity can open the door for women because the men want to see what you know. Once you demonstrate you are a business

person and know your stuff, they respond to you based on your knowledge, not your gender."

**Biggest Benefit:**

"Although I wish I had entered the export game earlier, in hindsight (and it is always 20/20 vision then) I realize we needed the time to learn our own markets and products. Many people miss that and go in unprepared. But the exporting timeline is very important and you have to put in your time. In some industries, it's two years, in some it may be seven, so you just have to be patient."

**Export Tips:**

- "Don't be scared and don't give up. Although expanding to another country may sound huge, just treat it like another city. If you are organized and set up properly, it's not a big stretch."
- "Network to get the information you need to make sure you are ready when you go there. Remember, you only have one chance to make that good first impression."
- "Do a 'look and see' to scope out how you will fit into the market. You may have to adapt your product or approach for different geographic areas."
- "Understand that there will be a time lag between that first knock on the door and the first sale. You must build relationships first."

**Future Plans:**

"The stone industry is global. I want to entrench myself in the U.S. first, and I firmly believe the European market will pull in my product after that. I won't have to push to get in."