

SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS

Newfoundland entrepreneur Sydney Ryan has found the key to long-term success: innovation. It's a trait she inherited from her father who started Telelink to provide phone answering services to St. John's doctors and lawyers 50 years ago.

"My dad was a pioneer. He brought the first communications towers and paging systems to the island, and the first air-to-ground commercial telephones on airplanes."

Inspired by his innovative spirit, Ryan and her business partner, Cindy Roma, grew Telelink in leaps and bounds after stepping into the co-CEO roles two decades ago. Today, the contact centre employs 100 people and provides services to customers in Canada, the U.S., the United Kingdom, Mexico and South America.

"We expanded our traditional answering service. Our customers were looking for more specialized services to keep their employees safe, so we evolved to meet their needs," says Ryan. "It opened up a whole new world for us. Today, our revenue is 10 times what it was when we took over the company."

Success also means weathering storms, including the downturn that hit Newfoundland and Labrador's economy when oil prices plummeted in 2014-15. Telelink shifted gears quickly to replace lost revenues from its customers in the oil and gas sector.

"We started providing outsourced labour to U.S. call centres that were desperate for talent," explains Ryan. "True success is getting yourself through the rough times. We're growing every day. The Australian market is on our radar next."

The company also knows when to turn to others, like the Business Women in International Trade (BWIT) program, for support and advice.

"Our role is to advocate for businesses like Telelink," explains Trade Commissioner Lynne Thomson. "We have a significant networking capacity through our 161 offices in Canada and abroad. We use our connections to introduce business women to the right people, such as buyers, partners and others who will help their businesses grow. We organize trade missions, which include business-to-business meetings, matchmaking and networking receptions to give Canadian business women profile internationally."

Thomson says maintaining a long-term relationship with the BWIT team makes a world of difference. "Businesses change hands, direction and focus. We're here to help. Stay in touch with us. We'll keep you visible and let you know about new opportunities in international markets."

Ready to grow? Connect with the BWIT team by email today: bwit@international.gc.ca.

“ SOUND ADVICE: WHY MENTORS MATTER



"I love mentoring women of all ages and at all stages of entrepreneurship. Being a mentor is about providing guidance, counselling and feedback, as well as introducing them to new contacts."

"How do you find the right mentor for you? You should share the same passion for business. Make sure there's a strong connection. Tell your

mentor what you want to achieve, ask for help to explore new ideas, clarify realistic goals and explore solutions together."

Anik Lehouiller, Réseau des Femmes d'affaires
du Québec mentor
Montreal, QC

BDC INVESTS IN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

"Women entrepreneurs represent an enormous economic force in Canada. The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) is committed to helping women-owned businesses grow and succeed both domestically and internationally. That's why we take great pride in our partnership with BWIT."

"Our investment in women includes the Women Entrepreneurs' Initiative, which provides loans and support to companies that are majority women-owned. We have earmarked \$700 million in lending for women over three years. We offer advisory services and mentorship tailored to each business' needs."

"We are delighted to be injecting \$50 million into women-led start-up tech firms. Some of the funds will be used to create a program with venture and growth capital."

Nancy Goudreau, Director, Corporate Financing
Business Development Bank of Canada

