

It's been said that if you make a better mousetrap, the world will beat a path to your door. Many Canadian products and services have been viewed as "better mousetraps" here at home as well as beyond our border.

Canadian's have given the world pabulum, the paint roller, insulin, the telephone, instant potato flakes, the cardiac pacemaker and, of course, the game Trivial Pursuit.

As a business person, you know there are two essentials to the sales process - something to sell and someone to buy it.

Something to sell

Assess your potential as an exporter by realistically examining your products or services in a global framework. Begin by asking the following questions:

- Who already uses your product or service? Is it in broad general use or is it limited to a particular group because of socio-economic factors? Is it particularly popular with a certain age group?
- What modifications are required for it to appeal to customers in a foreign market?
- Is its use influenced or affected by climatic or geographic factors? If so, what are they?

- What is its shelf life? Will it be affected by time in transit?
- Does your product or service involve operating costs? If so, what complementary equipment or services must the customer buy?
- Does it require professional assembly or other technical skills?
- What special packaging or literature is required? These costs must be added to the unit cost to determine whether or not you can export at a competitive price.
- What are the technical or regulatory requirements? They may differ from country to country.

Success in export markets takes a total commitment to understanding their product requirements and their cultural differences.

*A.G. Bykhovsky,
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- What after-sales service is needed? Is it locally available or is it up to you to provide it? If you need to pro-

vide it, do you have the resources?

- How easily can the product be shipped? Would shipping costs make competitive pricing a problem?
- Will you be able to serve both your domestic customers and your new foreign clients?
- If domestic demand increases, can you still handle the requirements of your export customers?

It may take time to find the information you need to answer some of these questions. Local sources can help, including public or post-secondary school libraries, export organizations, government departments and other exporters. With their assistance, you will have a clearer picture of your company's export potential.

Somewhere to sell it

Once you've chosen what to export, you'll want to think about possible export markets.

It certainly won't take you long to come up with a list of countries. Chances are you will choose a mix—those you're most familiar with because of their linguistic and cultural similarities to Canada as well as those with a proven record for buying Canadian products.

When you begin exporting, it's best not to spread yourself too thin. Look at your list to select the most promising. Then pick out the candidate markets that combine