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- Local Office

Establishing local offices is risky but potentially the most lucrative form financially.

By far the most risky organizational mode, some Canadian firms have been successful in establishing local branch offices in the U.S. State licensing and work permits have been obtained, local staff hired, and business networks have been established. The Local Office route requires extensive time, effort and financing but, as some have found, the payoff in the end has been lucrative. Firms considering this mode should ensure that they have the managerial capacity to handle both Canadian and American operations.

Immigration and work permit restrictions are very onerous in the U.S.

Canadian firms should be aware of the immigration restrictions existing in the United States. Canadian architects can obtain work permits in the U.S. in one of four ways: by obtaining a B-1 visa for exploratory visits; an H-1 visa for "persons of distinguished merit and ability"; an H-2 visa for "persons who desire to enter the United States temporarily to perform other temporary services or labour if unemployed persons capable of performing such service or labour cannot be found in the United States"; or, if a U.S. branch office has been legally established, an L-1 visa "for certain employees of international firms who are being transferred...in a managerial or executive capacity or in a capacity requiring specialized knowledge".

Interpretation of regulations is often arbitrary and not uniform.

Employment visas are issued by local Immigration and Naturalization Service offices. There are no uniform standards in the United States that prevent differing interpretations and decisions by INS personnel. An architect may be judged in New York's INS office to have "distinguished merit and ability" and then, a year later to be rejected by San Francisco's INS office.

To obtain an H-2 visa for Canadian staff, it is conceivable that a legally-established firm could be forced to advertise nation-wide, and only if a suitable U.S. candidate cannot be found (from 72,000 licensed architects) be able to hire its Canadian principal to work in the U.S.

According to U.S. consular officials in Ottawa, a Canadian architect, wishing to set