

"If you don't want to make any mistakes, be sure you are export ready."

STÉPHANIE BEAUDOIN

STÉPHANIE BEAUDOIN, Vice-President & Associate

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Year Established: 2000

Employees: 11

Years Exporting: 5

Exports Sales: 20%

Export Market: North

America, Asia and Europe



Business Description: From a fruit, said to be as old as mankind, La Face Cachée de la Pomme (hidden side of the apple) introduced apple ice wine to the Quebec market, pioneering production techniques in the industry. This award-winning golden beverage is sold in Quebec and abroad as an exclusive dessert wine brand, found in the finest cellars and food stores. The company produces two types of ice cider, Neige (Snow), and the more distinguished Frimas (Frost).

Motion picture director Stéphanie Beaudoin, known for her movie about the life of French actress Sarah Bernhardt, met now-husband François Pouliot, a film and video producer, in 1998. François had contributed to the development of ice cider, making it at an old apple orchard he bought. In 2000, this weekend hobby became a full-time business venture, with Stéphanie and François at the helm. "Ice cider was unknown in the world, but we were convinced of its potential," explains Stéphanie.

At first, Neige and Frimas were sold in the province through SAQ (Quebec's liquor control agency) as well as directly to restaurant owners and on the property. Soon Stéphanie's main focus shifted to communications and the export side of the business.

EXPORTING CRUCIAL

Both Stéphanie and François felt that exporting was imperative. They wanted to promote Quebec's unique culture. "We think it's important to spread the province's image around the world, and Neige and Frimas bottle the stuff of dreams. They are the fruit of our very best, the expression of our thirst for taste and sophistication," Stéphanie says. Secondly, "we wanted to grow." Lastly, it seemed wise "not to put all our eggs in one basket."

France was the first market they explored. They eventually cracked new ones after Stéphanie attended various fairs and trade shows where she met potential importers. The U.S., courted for quite some time, is La Face Cachée de la Pomme's largest export market. "This was not easy because each state has its own rules for selling alcohol and American legislation doesn't allow us to specify the year of production on the bottle's label," explains Stéphanie.

RESOURCES ACCESSED

The company is registered with the federal government's Virtual Trade Commissioner, which Stéphanie says is a great help. "I receive e-mail information about events across the globe and the Trade Commissioner Service has also supplied me with market studies," she notes. She has also accessed support from the Quebec Agri-Food Export Club through two different programs financed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Today, the entrepreneurial owners of La Face Cachée de la Pomme have several avenues for expansion in mind. They want to secure their current export markets and open others, with a goal of increasing their export sales to 50%. In addition, they just introduced a new product named "Neige Eternelle" (Eternal Snow), produced from the juices extracted from apples kept in oak barrels to age like wine.

Lessons Learned

FRUITS OF EXPERIENCE

Based on her lessons learned while developing export markets, Stéphanie Beaudoin has devised three "ground rules" for export success:

- **Scout abroad.** Participation in fairs, trade shows and other promotional events has proved invaluable for Stéphanie. "These types of events have allowed us to meet and select the importers. We do not want them to be too small sized, nor too general, nor too big. We want to ensure that the team we work with takes great care of our niche products."
- **Think twice.** "If you don't want to make mistakes, be sure you are export ready. Three years ago, for instance, we did not want to export to Japan. Although the quality of our packaging has always met the high standards there, we would not have been able to keep up with the demand. Now we have the production capacity, and this year Neige was even introduced at Expo 2005 in Aichi, Japan."
- **Specify payment conditions.** "One small example – determine if you will be paid in Canadian or American dollars or in euros in order to avoid any misunderstandings."

"No matter what country you're in, it's all the same – people with needs trying to find solutions."

DR. NANCY MATHIS

DR. NANCY MATHIS, President & CEO

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Year Established: 1995

Employees: 22

Years Exporting: 10

Exports Sales: 90%

Export Market: U.S.,

Europe, Brazil, Taiwan, China,

Australia, Iran, Turkey, Korea



Business Description: Mathis Instruments provides heat sensor solutions for R&D, manufacturing and quality control environments, offering the latest in rapid, non-destructive thermal analysis instruments. The purpose of the technology is to measure the ability of a material to transfer heat – thermal effusivity. It is used by large pharmaceutical clients to ensure that drugs manufactured from powders are uniform and at the proper level of moisture and lubrication. Other customers include manufacturers of electronic materials. In 1999, Mathis won the international R&D 100 Award, a coveted innovation award that has also recognized Polaroid film, anti-lock brakes and the ATM.

A female entrepreneur, exporter and engineer, Nancy Mathis is used to being non-traditional across the board. And in her very specialized industry, she has found that's a benefit. With so few women doing what she does, she and her company stand out. "When you're exporting, you are selling, when you're selling, you're solving problems and when you're solving problems, you're listening," she observes. "And I think women make phenomenal listeners, coming up with solutions that really impact a customer."

BREAKTHROUGH RESEARCH

With a Ph.D. in chemical engineering and a rare talent for making the complex simple, Nancy has been developing solutions since her school days. The sensor technology at the root of Mathis' products is the result of her Ph.D. research. When she and her mechanical engineer husband, Chris, launched Mathis in 1995, after she was encouraged to commercialize her research, she initially focused on R&D and also taught at the University of New Brunswick, which incubated the new company. In 2000, she became President and CEO. They entered the export game very quickly when their first U.S. distributor announced their product offering to its entire 50-country channel.

With the majority of pharmaceutical manufacturing "a stone's throw away" along the U.S. eastern seaboard, Mathis initially concentrated there. Nancy is currently developing a strategy for Europe, the second largest pharmaceutical market, and is sourcing a distributor in the U.K. and Ireland.

Mathis uses a mix of its own direct sales team and a network of partners and distributors on the thermal side of the business, selling its instrumentation as far afield as Korea, China and even Iran. "Working through partners has been successful for us," maintains Nancy.

CERTIFICATION A CHALLENGE

Certification, which is different in every country, has proven to be the greatest export challenge for Mathis. "You must have your standardization in advance of selling into a country and sometimes, even with the best market intelligence, it's difficult to determine if the market will bear out the investment you make."

Despite these complexities, Nancy can't imagine not exporting. Exporting gives you access to a massive market, and there are no insurmountable barriers, she says. "No matter what country you're in, it's all the same. You can do business in any language across any kind of food over the dinner table. Whether it's green beer on St. Patrick's Day in Toronto or sake in Japan, it's the same process."

Lessons Learned

CRACKING INTO NEW MARKETS

Winner of Canada's top innovation honour in 2004 – the Manning Award for Innovation – Nancy Mathis continues to break new ground worldwide in the field of sensor technology advancement. She shares these success factors for global expansion:

- **Use outside resources.** Mathis has tapped into loans, grants and networking introductions from various government agencies. "Industry Canada has been a good resource for us." Whether it's co-development or project money, the National Research Council and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency have also been supportive since the beginning. "They're happy to help both new and established companies."
- **Determine the best representation.** Mathis generally enters a new market using a distributor and, once the demand warrants it, will go direct and hire people.
- **Be prepared to travel.** "Initially, I spent 60% of my time travelling. Once you are more established, you can cut back."
- **Leverage technology to communicate.** "In our business, a potential customer can get up-to-speed through our web information, webinars and interactive teleconferencing. If you utilize this technology, it doesn't matter whether you're selling to California or to countries abroad."