
Section Eleven: Benefitting from Experience: Case Studies

Several Canadian engineering firms are currently conducting environmental work in the United States. These firms have generally entered the market for reasons similar to those described in the Executive Summary, namely to diversify market risk, to access greater revenues and profits, and to advance the Canadian and American operations toward the technical and managerial "cutting edge" of the industry.

With a few exceptions, Canadian engineers have entered the U.S. environmental market through a local partner. This approach allows access to local credibility and contacts, while also addressing the *Catch 22* situation where Canadians "require a U.S. track record to obtain business yet need U.S. business to develop a track record".

One Canadian firm suggested that "a well satisfied client will bring in other business", implying that through developing a network, and conducting quality work, Canadian firms will succeed in the United States. Another source presented the view that Canadian firms have to "become American" in order to succeed, suggesting that firms that attempt to control their U.S. operation with excessively tight strings from Canada will not succeed. This source felt that Canadians often attempt to sell *Canadian* services to Americans ("as if the U.S. is some third-world market") when these firms should be selling *American* services to Americans.

One firm expressed the view that its success is based upon technical expertise and high quality, responsive service. A combination of these two elements is required for successful market penetration in the opinion of this company, although the fundamental question that must be asked is "do I have a product and/or service of interest to Americans?" It is also necessary to view the penetration strategy as "going North American" wherein the border essentially disappears.

To provide a further indication of strategies followed by other firms, we have selected six anonymous companies and briefly profiled their path in the following case studies.

Case Study A

This case profiles one British Columbia engineering consulting firm that entered the U.S. market approximately ten years ago. The firm broke into the U.S. market through a joint venture arrangement with a twenty-year old Georgia firm. Over time, the firm has become one of the