

New Brunswick companies take the floor in Ireland

— continued from page 1

Established in 1992 by owner Vincent De Merchant, Majestic Forest Products has built a solid reputation for manufacturing high-quality, top-grade products from New Brunswick wood primarily. For the past 18 months, the 12-employee company has been focusing on producing superior unfinished hardwood flooring in both metric and imperial dimensions — and now their efforts are paying off. Though experienced in exporting to the United States, Majestic is seeing new markets open up in Hong Kong,

Spain, Portugal, Norway and the U.K.

Nailing down a deal in the Emerald Isle

Aware of the high demand for quality hardwood flooring in Ireland, but lacking local contacts, Majestic's Sales Manager Jim Patterson was eager to follow a trade lead provided by the International Business Opportunities Centre (IBOC).

That lead began when Owen Smith of C & S Timber Importers Ltd. in Cavan, Ireland, approached Gerry Mongey, Commercial Assistant at the Canadian Embassy in Dublin, with an urgent request for the names of Canadian manufacturers of top grade pre-finished and unfinished hardwood flooring in red and white oak and maple. It seems that a previous supplier had shipped goods of unacceptable quality.

Mongey immediately passed the details on to IBOC, where Sourcing Officer Marg MacGillivray followed the trail by searching the WIN Exports database. This search identified Majestic Forest Products as a possible supplier. When contacted by IBOC, Jim Patterson immediately confirmed both his interest and Majestic's capability to satisfy the requirements.

Getting a chance to launch into exports

Determined to meet the demands of C & S Timber Importers and enter a new and very lucrative market, Patterson suggested that Factory Direct Hardwood Floors of Shediac, New Brunswick, a distributor of hardwood flooring products, could provide the pre-finished portion of the



IBOC
International Business Opportunities Centre

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As Team Canada Inc's Sourcing Centre, the International Business Opportunities Centre (IBOC) matches business opportunities from around the world with the business interests of Canadian exporters, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. IBOC offers a value-added service to trade commissioners by directly contacting Canadian companies about foreign trade leads.

To pursue our international trade leads, check out our Web site at www.iboc.gc.ca (particularly our E-Leads® and Web-Leads®).

deal. Michel Baillargeon of Factory Direct jumped at the chance to sell his company's product overseas — and learn about the exporting business. "It was risky to some extent but the opportunity was worth the risk," said Baillargeon.

The two companies worked together to hammer out a competitive price that clinched the deal.

"Thanks to the excellent service and assistance we received from the Canadian Embassy and IBOC, we've started what we hope will be an ongoing relationship with C & S Timber Importers to meet future demand in Ireland for superior hardwood flooring," said Majestic's Patterson.

Factory Direct's Baillargeon had this to say about his first exporting experience, "It was very rewarding — a great start. We're definitely in the market for future export sales." ❁

Prospecting global markets

Prospectus is helping e-exporters

Many Canadian business people know in their hearts that business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce software is part of the technical toolkit companies need to compete in the \$10 trillion global export marketplace. Yet a recent study by International Data Corporation (IDC) Canada (www.idc.ca) shows only 3% of Canadian medium-sized businesses have supply-chain management fully integrated with their Web sites, versus 15% of American firms.

Part of the problem is knowing who to trust in a world filled with outlandish claims from e-solutions vendors. Especially acute is the problem of finding trustworthy partners in foreign markets.

"Technology itself is not the answer. People still matter. In exporting, a lot depends on relationships," says Marvin Bedward, President and CEO of Prospectus Group (www.prospectus.com), an Ottawa-based provider of e-business solutions. "And so for some years now we have been working to develop a B2B solution that is on the leading edge of technology, while also developing better tools to reinforce rooted relationships."

Now, a flurry of announcements from Prospectus indicates the long gestation period is coming to an end, with key sales in Mexico, Brazil, Italy and Canada.

New e-marketplaces

In November, Prospectus announced that it had entered into a teaming agreement with aRegional of Mexico (www.aRegional.com), a software developer and Internet services provider, to market business solutions in Mexico. The partnership will promote nTelligence™, a proprietary Web platform developed by Prospectus, to create e-marketplaces for Mexican clients and advanced e-procurement and project planning solutions.

"We are very impressed by the power of nTelligence™," said Jesús Alberto Cano Vélez, Director General of aRegional. "We already use the Internet to provide diverse clients with information and tools but nTelligence™ gives us a highly flexible platform that expands our offerings and enhances the solutions we can deliver."

As well, Prospectus announced it has entered into an agreement with ViaSafe Inc. (www.viasafe.com) of Ottawa, to develop a secure, automated trade documentation delivery system for SourceCan (www.sourcecan.com), an Internet-based partnering and business opportunities trading network. This Canadian "e-marketplace" was developed by HyperNet (www.hypernet.ca), a wholly owned subsidiary of Prospectus, in partnership with Industry Canada and the Canadian Commercial Corporation.

The Italian connection

Prospectus is also building itself an impressive set of Italian relationships. First, Prospectus announced the formation of AMERIGO Corporation (www.amerigocorp.com), a joint venture with Simpres Lab, an Italian software integrator. AMERIGO has licensed its Discovery ASP Platform as part of an agreement with one of Italy's largest e-services companies.

This deal was immediately followed up with a two-year service and development agreement with IntesaBCI Bank of Canada (www.intesabci.ca) to build a portal that will showcase Canadian communities to IntesaBCI customers in Italy.

Future prospects

So with all of these prospects, where is the company headed?

"Prospectus is making rapid progress on several fronts," says Jan Fedorowicz, a Prospectus director. "But we need to maintain our focus. For the foreseeable future we are going to remain in Mexico and the other Latin American markets. We believe in the positive impact the FTAA will have on the region over the long term. And Prospectus has always been a company that keeps its eye on the future."

Indeed it does. Prospectus, in partnership with CGI (www.cgi.ca) of Montreal, one of Canada's leading solutions providers and systems integrators, has also secured \$150,000 from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for a feasibility study of a business portal for the Americas.

"The portal," explains Susan Harper, Canada's Ambassador to Uruguay, "has tremendous potential for countries such as Uruguay where both communities and individuals increasingly have access to the Internet and where the distance from other markets has always been a real barrier."

"The Prospectus project is exciting because it connects, for the first time, all of the countries of the Americas through an e-marketplace."

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