



# Canadian Exporters: Profile

Nancy Knowlton, Vice-President, Operations • **Smart Technologies Inc.** • Calgary

Calgary business-woman Nancy Knowlton sees Mexico as a market ready for new, innovative technologies. That is why she is sparing little effort to promote her company's software products in this expanding market.

Smart Technologies is a six-year-old company that produces and markets high-quality, innovative and practical software. SMART 2000, its signature product, is a user-friendly, multimedia conference, training and presentation system for Windows. It allows computer images to be projected on to a blank, touch-sensitive screen. The software includes a notepad whose notes and diagrams can be memorized and printed on any kind of data-processing equipment.

Smart has about 40 employees, and has sales offices in Canada and the United States (North Carolina and Southern California) and projects sales of \$8 million in 1994.

Exporting is the mainstay of Smart's business, with its major markets including Japan, Australia, the United States, Europe and the Middle East. "We are actively trying to expand," said Nancy Knowlton, Vice-President Operations, before leaving for the COMDEX (communications expo) in Mexico City.

"We have been to many U.S.-based trade shows, and have met some representatives from Mexico. It is directly as a result of NAFTA that we are looking at the Mexican market. Before undertaking this trip, we talked to other companies that export to Mexico, and have heard

their experiences and learned from them."

Smart engages in partnership agreements where appropriate in order to maximize the company's effectiveness. In December 1992, Smart and Intel Corporation entered a long-term agreement to jointly develop data-conferencing products for desktop and conference room applications. Both companies will have the right to sell and distribute each other's products.

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Ms. Knowlton said that Smart Technologies undertook considerable research before venturing into any new market. Well aware of the need for a Mexican presence in that market, she said, "We will only operate through a Mexican distribution system. From feelers we put out, between 30 and 40 companies expressed interest in representing us. We asked them for meetings in Mexico City, and asked for plans and proposals, which we will study carefully.

"We have taken part in training

sessions on doing business in Mexico. Our biggest concern is the import restrictions. Mexico has a complex set of regulations — as complicated as I have ever seen. We had to have our Chamber of Commerce vouch for us. Once we have a Mexican distributor, I think it will be simpler — they'll be able to sort through all the Mexican requirements. We will learn all the regulations, and how to live with them."

Nonetheless, Ms. Knowlton feels there is some work to be done in streamlining the system of doing business between Canada and Mexico — "probably both ways" — as the volume of paperwork and translation requirements surprised her.

Smart Technologies participates in about 26 trade fairs annually. "There is no substitute for experience, or for the benefits provided by participation in trade fairs. Without these fairs, we would not be growing nearly as quickly," Nancy Knowlton has said.

As for Mexico, the future is bright, according to the company's researches. "Mexico needs to rebuild its infrastructures, a process that will require our type of expertise and advanced technology," Ms. Knowlton says.

## Access

**Access**, the newsletter of the new Access North America (ANA) program, is published monthly and only in *CanadExport*. Subscribers to *CanadExport* automatically receive *Access*. It examines opportunities for Canadian businesses, introduces some Canadians already operating in the Mexican and U.S. markets, profiles specific sectors, and notifies readers of forthcoming events related to doing business in Mexico.

Your feedback is welcomed; correspondence should be sent to Access, BCT, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0G2, telephone (613) 992-5791.

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