

ACCESS

ALBERTA

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Savvy Interactive Video Game Company Tops in Export Markets

If you're secretly a video game enthusiast, then you may have felt the thrill of navigating the sci-fi world of *Baldur's Gate*, *IceWind Dale*, *Neverwinter Nights* or *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*.

These award-winning games are just a few titles from the Edmonton electronics entertainment company, **BioWare Corp.** Not only does the company develop computer and console games, but also the game engine technology that powers them and provides the animation, special effects, audio and other features.

Since incorporation in 1995, the Alberta-based company has sold more than eight million software units in over 40 countries in North America, Europe, Australia, Israel, Latin America, and the Asia-Pacific. Each game is translated into an average of 12 different languages.

These outstanding sales figures translated into one phenomenal statistic — exports account for approximately



WD Minister Dr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (L) presented the Export Award of Distinction to Dr. Ray Muzyka (R), joint CEO of BioWare Corp., at the awards gala held in Calgary.

98 per cent of BioWare's sales. That's an estimated \$13 million plus in sales in the last fiscal year alone.

These export stats emphasize why BioWare Corp. was honoured at the **Alberta Business Awards of Distinction** held at the TELUS Convention Centre in Calgary on February 18th. The company took home the **Export Award of Distinction**, sponsored annually by Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD).

BioWare's export strategy is incorporated directly into its core value of an absolute commitment to quality, both in its workplace and its products. To be successful in world markets, the company ensures that its games incorporate regional, cultural and economic uniqueness. The company has formed strategic partnerships with regional industry specialists. And, it prides itself on providing exemplary customer service worldwide, continually exceeding customers' expectations, interacting directly with game fans through message boards, and incorporating fan feedback into new games.

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP

BioWare Takes Home Top Export Honours

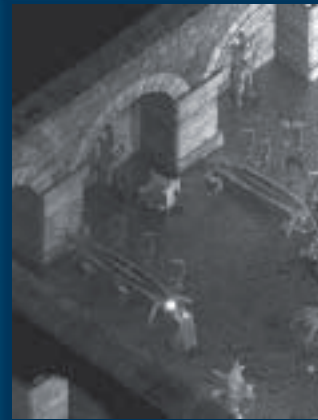
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Over the past three years, an aggressive export strategy helped BioWare expand its existing market significantly. The company plans to further develop high potential markets throughout the Asia-Pacific region, as the gaming communities in these areas are unique – thousands turn out for gaming events.

WD's Catherine Barclay, one of the judges for the award, commented that deciding on a 2004 winner was no easy task. In addition to BioWare and finalists Upside Software Inc. and Micralyne Inc., WD received four other equally impressive nominations for the award. "This was by far the most difficult judging decision we have had to make to date. Each company is worthy of its own award for exporting excellence, but BioWare was a head above the rest."

Western Economic Diversification Canada is pleased to recognize BioWare Corp. for its achievements in exporting worldwide. Congratulations also go out to finalists Upside Software Inc. and Micralyne Inc., as well as the other nominees in the Export category.

For complete details on winners and finalists for all categories of the Alberta Business Awards of Distinction, visit www.abbusinessawards.ab.ca. 🍁



Games, such as the Baldur's Gate, are unique. They have set a new standard that has rejuvenated interest in gaming.

Photo courtesy of BioWare Corp.

Aboriginal-Owned Company Wins Pre

by Kristi Rosko

Calgary Business Information Centre



The Calgary Business Information Centre and Western Economic Diversification Canada congratulate Marie Delorme, recipient of the 2004 Salute to Excellence Community Involvement award.

Photo by Cole Cooper.

The **Calgary Chamber of Commerce Salute to Excellence Awards** gala was held on January 17th. Taking home the Community Involvement award was **Calgary Business Information Centre** client Marie Delorme, founder and owner of **imagiNATION Cards Inc.**

Delorme and her company have an ongoing commitment to excellence in business practices and giving back to the community.

The imagiNATION Collection provides an exceptional line of art cards and gifts to corporations and retail stores in Canada, the U.S. and Europe. Paper products are earth-friendly, made entirely from recycled materials, and the

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

BioWare Used WD Hiring Program to Improve Its Hardware

BioWare Corp. is no stranger to Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD). Over the past several years the company has used unique business development program to ensure they had the expertise needed to help develop hardware and software products.

With help from WD's **First Jobs in Science and Technology Program**, BioWare has hired three recent post-secondary graduates.

David Falkner, a programming graduate from the University of Alberta, was hired to help

develop a set of tools used to work with the BioWare Infinity Engine. The tools allowed developers to edit and modify data used by the engine, as well as perform other updates that have increased the longevity and ability to create new products for it.

More recently, BioWare hired Aaryn Flynn, also a programming graduate from the University of Alberta, to create game software, and develop and implement art pipeline software and graphic engine systems.

For more information about BioWare Corp., visit their website at www.bioware.com or call (780) 430-0164.

For information about the First Jobs in Science and Technology Program or other business development programs and services offered by WD, visit www.wd.gc.ca/finance. 🍁



te series, are what make BioWare standard for role-playing games in this game genre worldwide.

stigious Salute to Excellence Award

cards are designed for reuse. In 2003, the company more than doubled its annual sales thanks to an expansion into the retail marketplace and exports to Europe.

Art is produced exclusively by Aboriginal artists who are paid royalties on all products. imagiNATION also helps the artists generate revenues by arranging opportunities to sell commissioned art, and for customers to purchase prints and originals.

“Marie’s idea was to give back a good and equitable portion to the artist...along with making her dreams a reality, she is helping to make a lot of artists’ dreams a reality too,” said artist Frederick R. McDonald.

In addition to donating thousands of dollars annually to local charities, imagiNATION Cards also supports non-profit organizations like Calgary Vocational Services that packages and ships imagiNATION’s cards.

In 2002, Delorme was recognized by the Métis Nation as Entrepreneur of the Year and also for her Contribution to the Community in 2001. She has also been profiled in the Canadian book, *Women in the Lead*, published by the Richard Ivey School of Business in 2001, as well as in *Excellence in Business Communication*. 🍁

The Power of the Engine

The past few years haven't been very kind to technology companies. Yet through this difficult period **Redengine Inc.** has continued to provide quality solutions to its customers. So, how have they managed to grow by 720 per cent in five years and become one of Profit Magazine's fastest growing companies in Canada while others have failed? Quite simply, by forging unbreakable relationships with their customers.

In a business dominated by impersonal technology, Edmonton-based Redengine has gained a reputation for personality and service that goes the extra mile. The company's focus on relationships enables the collaboration and communication that is so critical to a successful technology project.

But goodwill can only take a company so far. Ultimately, technology businesses have to deliver innovative solutions to complex problems. Redengine jumped to the front of the pack by developing robust, yet affordable content management products for content-rich websites. Packages tailored for municipalities and member-based organizations have found favour with diverse clients, such as the Association of Canadian Archivists, the City of Fort Saskatchewan and the Alberta College of Pharmacists.

In 1999, the company began developing products under the brand name Knowledge Channel that would propel the company into this sector. Redengine accessed two of Western Economic Diversification Canada's (WD)

business development programs for assistance in hiring recent post-secondary graduates to help the company grow and expand internationally.

With assistance from WD's **First Jobs in Science and Technology Program**, Redengine hired a graduate to develop three software products with a focus on Redengine's Content Manager. They also took advantage of WD's **International Trade Personnel Program (ITPP)** to hire a graduate to develop and implement a marketing plan to take these products to market.

"Their [the graduates] unique capabilities were key during a strategic evolution in our business," said CEO Tom Ogaranko.

Redengine has also innovated by addressing the softer, human side of technology. Their usability services gauge how well end users are able to interact with online systems — if they can't understand how to use the system, why bother building it? The company's expert site evaluations and user testing focus on the user's experience and provide details about problem areas. They also provide recommendations on how the systems can be used more easily. "The principles of usability are absolutely consistent with a customer-first approach," says Norman Mendoza, company COO.

Redengine believes that technology projects are about much more than implementing software. The World Wide Web has the potential to transform how organizations operate on a truly fundamental level. But impact of this kind can only be achieved

INNOVATION

by understanding a business' approach, goals and reason for being. This kind of focus can reshape the way a business reaches and meets their customer's needs.

Perhaps Redengine's most unique quality is its ability to address all of these elements in one package. Few other companies are able to provide such a holistic, end-to-end approach to technology projects. A website or application shouldn't stand alone, isolated from all other parts of a business. It must be an integrated part of an organization's identity, business plan and customer relationships. It's a message Redengine has preached for years. Maybe that's the power of the "engine" – and the reason they're going strong.

For more information about Redengine, call 1-877-837-5087 or visit www.redengine.com.

For more information about WD's programs and services, call 1-888-338-WEST (9378) or visit our website at: www.wd.gc.ca.✻



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New Economic Agreement Brings the Federal and Alberta Governments Together

by Laura McNabb



The National High Field Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Centre (NANUC) was officially opened at the University of Alberta in 1998. The facility enables scientists to conduct biomedical research, and also has applications for the pharmaceutical and petroleum industries. The 800 MHz nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer seen here is the largest and most advanced instrument of its kind publicly available in Canada. NANUC received \$1.3 million in funding from the Canada/Alberta WEPA in 1998.

In the spirit of cooperation, the governments of Canada and Alberta have formally committed to a new four-year, \$50 million economic development initiative for the province.

Signed on December 5, 2003, in Edmonton, the **Canada/Alberta Western Economic Partnership Agreement (WEPA)** will focus on innovation, value-added industries, regional economic development and sustainable communities. Each level of government will provide \$25 million towards cost-shared initiatives promoting these priorities.

Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) and Alberta Economic Development were signing partners at a ceremony that included representatives from past successful WEPA projects — the MicroSystems Technology Research Institute (MSTRI) and the National Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Centre (NANUC), both located at the University of Alberta, and the Olds College Centre for Innovation. The first WEPA was signed in 1998 and saw \$40 million invested in Alberta.

Alberta was the third of four western provinces to sign agreements with the federal government. The \$25 million federal allocation for Alberta is part of a \$100 million Government of Canada investment in the West through the Western Economic Partnership Agreements.

The new program will be used to strengthen and diversify Alberta's economy by creating additional employment opportunities, supporting new economic infrastructure and promoting economic development and entrepreneurship.

For more information of the Canada/Alberta Western Economic Partnership Agreement, visit www.wd.gc.ca. ♣

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The World is Your Oyster ...Expand your business through exporting

by Linda Chorney
The Business Link Business Service Centre

Are you interested in doing business in the United States? Do you know about the opportunities — or challenges — the Japanese market offers? Has your website generated orders from European buyers? Would you like to showcase your product or service in a tradeshow in Mexico?

Your next business strategy may be to enter the world of export.

Exporting is an excellent way to expand your business activities, increase your productivity and be more competitive... if you know what you're doing. Before you send your goods across borders or take on international contracts, take time to acquire the skills and information you need to achieve international success.

Export Link is your first stop for export information in Alberta.

A specialized service of **The Business Link** (Alberta's primary Canada Business Service Centre), Export Link serves the needs of new and potential exporters throughout the province. Funded by Western Economic Diversification Canada, this new export service provides Alberta entrepreneurs with knowledge, skills and training needed to implement an effective export strategy.



Export Link Coordinator Gaëlle Gagné (R) assists a client. Export Link provides information and advice to help you launch your export venture.

Photo courtesy of The Business Link.

Doing business internationally requires careful consideration of variables, such as: cultural differences, required permits and foreign regulations, contracts and terms of payment — all of which will determine whether the venture will ultimately be profitable.

Export Link helps to prepare the first-time exporter throughout the planning stage of the export project. We'll assess your company's readiness to enter new markets. Our extensive database of government programs and services for exporters can help you find the financing you need to launch your export venture. Information on export planning, country profiles and logistics will prove invaluable as you research global markets.

A variety of trade-related seminars and workshops will be delivered throughout the year, including a border session on the U.S./Canada export process.

The Business Link's Export Link works in cooperation with regional centres throughout Alberta and is your central point of referral. To access our services or find the regional centre nearest you, call the toll-free export information line at 1-888-811-1119 or visit www.exportlink.ca.

The world is your "oyster"... explore all of its opportunities! ♦

Tips and Tools for the Aboriginal Business Owner

by Linda Chorney
The Business Link Business Service Centre

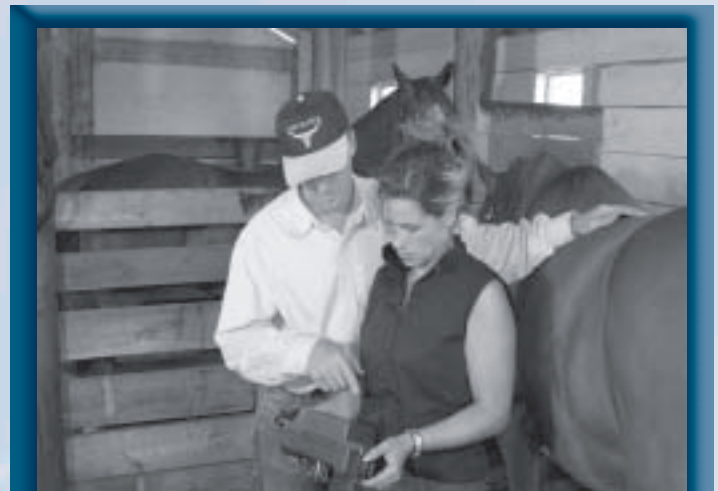
"Stay focused, keep working hard and be organized." If you run your own business, you can always use a few words of advice — especially from a fellow entrepreneur like Robin Hamilton who has worked her way to success and understands what it takes to get there.

Hamilton runs **EquiScan**, a home-based equine services company in DeWinton, south of Calgary. She is one of 10 Aboriginal business owners who share their story in a new web-based tool on **The Business Link Business Service Centre's** website, under its specialized **Aboriginal Business Service Network** section.

Through videos and company profiles, these real-life experiences provide insight and inspiration for starting or expanding a business. The six-minute video clips allow viewers to gain a better perspective of how other Aboriginal entrepreneurs have addressed various issues within their own home-based business.

The series showcases home businesses in three general stages of development: *start-up*, *established* and *take-off successes* where a home business grew into something much bigger. Six businesses profiled are based in Alberta and are part of a 13-program series broadcast nationally for HOMEbiz.TV/Affaires Chez Nous TV.

The profiles are just one of the many specialized products and services offered to Alberta's Aboriginal business community by The Business Link, with the support of Western Economic Diversification Canada and Alberta Economic Development. The Business Link is Alberta's primary Canada Business Service Centre, providing information and advice to entrepreneurs across the province.



EquiScan's Robin Hamilton (R) and her husband Buck (L) use an infra-red camera they specifically adapted to find and assess injuries to horses.

Photo courtesy of Third Wave Communications.

A series of guides was also developed by The Business Link to help prospective Aboriginal entrepreneurs decide if starting a business is the right choice, and provide information on business trends and industry sectors that offer great opportunities. The guides are available in print and online.

Check out The Business Link's Aboriginal section within its website at: www.cbsc.org/alberta/absn, where you can view the videos, download the guides and access other products and services. For personal service, call The Business Link at 1-800-272-9675, visit their downtown Edmonton location, or contact your local Community Futures office. 🍁