

ACCESS

MANITOBA

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Manitoba Companies Forge New Ties In Minnesota

by Lee Gregg

Manitoba's information and communications technology (ICT) companies are taking advantage of trade development missions to expand their international markets.

With the assistance of the Canadian Consulate General in Minneapolis, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) partnered with the Information and Communication Technology Association of Manitoba, Manitoba Trade, Industry Canada and the National Research Council to organize four trade missions to Minneapolis, which have garnered positive results.

"It was a real eye-opener to Consular services," noted Tyler Gompf, president of **Tell Us About Us Inc.** The company designs and develops software programs to solicit customer feedback, delivering a complete picture of an organization's performance through employee opinions and behaviours, customer perceptions, competitive intelligence and



"It was an excellent opportunity to meet other Manitoba companies and network with our peers," said Tyler Gompf, Tell Us About Us Inc.

financial performance. "I provided names of companies I wanted to meet and the Consulate staff was able to connect with these firms and arrange appointments."

In 2002, a team was assembled to design low-cost market development trips to the United States. The Canadian Consulate in Minneapolis, with an ICT network in eight states, advised that Minnesota represented the best market opportunity. WD provided sole financial support to the first trade mission in October

2002. The overall success of the mission resulted in subsequent visits in October 2003, and March and November 2004.

The cost to participate in these marketing trips was \$375 per company representative. A package was negotiated by the planning group resulting in reduced hotel rates and event entrance fees for participants.

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Trade Development Missions Help Expand International Markets

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Kent Ulrich of The Exchange Group found the Canadian Consulate tireless in their efforts to support Canadian exporters. "I spend twice as long and 10 times the money with half the results when I do this on my own."

technology company whose business intelligence is a good fit with our products," added Belos.

The planning group worked closely with the Manitoba companies to ensure that targeted U.S. firms would attend the networking sessions. They also spent two half-days at the Consulate office in trade development training activities that included legal issues, marketing and government procurement. "I found the consulate sessions extremely useful and applicable," said Belos. "I was very impressed with the highly knowledgeable people at the consulate and with the calibre of business contacts made available to us."

Kent Ulrich, vice president of business development for The Exchange Group (EXG), was equally impressed with the three missions he participated in. EXG has developed EXG Documents, a complete document communication system with secure worldwide access that allows access, search and display of any document using Internet Explorer. "I didn't expect to go down on my first trip and have a U.S.

"We received very good value for the cost of the trip," said Lazar Belos, president of **Cybox Systems**. Cybox Systems designs software that allows the retail sector to input, organize and access business information in a wide range of topics including point-of-sale, inventory, forecasting, distribution, accounts receivable and business intelligence.

"We participated in the first trade mission in 2002 and signed with what is now our biggest customer. We went again in 2004 and have formed a partnership with a

business on my front door," said Ulrich. "I was very impressed with the Consular staff and the quality of the networking and information sessions. There is no better way of getting into the market than these missions."

The success of these trade missions has made it possible for WD to extend this service to ICT firms in Saskatchewan and northwestern Ontario, with companies from both provinces participating in the November 2004 mission. Expanding this export marketing model to other industry associations is currently being evaluated.

For information about Tell Us About Us Inc., visit www.tellusaboutus.com; Cybox Systems, visit www.cyboxsystems.com; and The Exchange Group, visit www.exg.ca.[✦]



Cybox Systems' Marketing Director Geoff Tollefson (L) and Marketing Analyst Ian Strachan (R) are expanding the company's export sales by building on their successful missions.

Photo courtesy of Cybox Systems.

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U.S. Consul Visits Eastman Regional Trade Show

by Lee Gregg



Mary Greber, executive director of Winnipeg River Brokenhead CFDC, welcomes Todd Schwartz.

Winnipeg River Brokenhead Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) was pleased to welcome Todd Schwartz, U.S. Consul to Manitoba, to the **North Eastman Regional Small Business Trade Show** in Beausejour in October 2004.

Schwartz touched on the importance of Canada-U.S. relations and, despite some trade irritants, noted that Canada enjoys a healthy and vibrant trade relationship that the U.S. government values. The U.S. also recognizes the important role small businesses play and Schwartz applauded the entrepreneurs' pioneer spirit that has helped to build both countries.

Following the ceremony, Schwartz toured the trade show and spoke with several exhibitors. "I'm grateful to learn about the broad range of economic activity in the region. It's great to see individuals, with support from Western Economic Diversification Canada and the CFDC, taking charge of their futures and building up their communities."

As part of the CFDC's Small Business Week activities, a regional trade show is held to showcase small business and promote the local economy. For information on CFDC programs and services, call (204) 943-2905 or visit www.cfpm.mb.ca/.✻

Minister's Award for Excellence in CFDC Volunteerism

by Lee Gregg

In 2004, Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) created the **Minister's Award for Excellence in CFDC Volunteerism** in recognition of the volunteers who provide the direction that govern the CFDCs in Manitoba.

Ron Sellen, manager of WD's Service Delivery Partnerships, presented the newly created award in December 2004 to its first winner — Paul Chapman, board member for the Winnipeg River Brokenhead CFDC.

"The spirit of volunteerism is one of generosity," said Sellen. "Paul's ongoing

contribution to community economic development helps to make the program a success."

"This award is humbling," noted Chapman. "I'm only one in a large group of volunteers. They are a great bunch of people and I accept this award on behalf of all us."

Chapman was instrumental in bringing the Community Futures program to the Eastman region. He is also a founding member of the Community Futures Partners of Manitoba, the association representing Manitoba's 16 CFDCs.✻



Ron Sellen (R) presents Paul Chapman (L) with the Minister's Award for Excellence in CFDC Volunteerism.

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From Barley to Beer

by Lee Gregg



Rob McCaig pours ground malt into the mash mixer, which converts starch into sugar. The CMBTC's malting and brewing facilities provide technical support to the grower, malting barley breeder, handling companies and traders, and maltsters and brewers.

Photo courtesy of the CMBTC.

Manitoba's **Canadian Malting Barley Technical Centre (CMBTC)** has become such a success that even the Australians, Canada's biggest competitor in the malting barley industry, want in.

Established in August 2000, the CMBTC was founded by members of the Canadian malting barley and malt industry. Funded in part through the **Canada-Manitoba Economic Development Partnership Agreement**, the centre's mission is to be the focal point for applied malting and brewing research, and to provide technical support to members and customers to realize the full benefits of using Canadian malting barley.

The CMBTC has also focused its efforts on strengthening and expanding Canada's position in the international market. Large market gains have been made in China, the number one beer producing country in the world, and Vietnam has begun purchasing 50 per cent of their malting barley from Canada with this percentage set to increase.

"Canada produces on average about 13.5 million metric tons of barley a year," said Rob McCaig, CMBTC's managing director. "But only about 15 to 20 per cent (two million metric tons) meets the high

quality demanded for Canadian malting barley. This allows Canada to obtain a premium for its malting barley."

The CMBTC also provides training and seminars for international clients who visit to learn about the Canadian agricultural system, grain handling, malting and brewery industries. "The training opens their eyes to Canada's system and how it works," noted McCaig. "It helps them to commit to buying Canadian malting barley."

To further strengthen Canada's position in international markets, the CMBTC introduced its Cargo Quality Care program. Members send the CMBTC a sample of malting barley as it is being loaded for export. The sample is analyzed, malted and brewed at the CMBTC, and a report is prepared, which can be sent to the customer before the shipment arrives. "This is a tremendous service to customers of Canadian malting barley," said McCaig. "It was one of the reasons Canada was allowed back into the Columbian market, a market we had been locked out of for a number of years."

For information on the CMBTC, call (204) 984-4399 or visit www.cmbtc.com. ♦