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InterConnexion

A newsletter for partners in Canada Business Service Centres

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National News

Introducing *InterConnexion*

The Canada Business Service Centres (CBSC) began with one guiding concept – to assist small and medium-sized businesses by identifying the hundreds of government programs and services available to them.

Twenty-one federal departments and agencies have joined private sector partners and each province to create a seamless information network for entrepreneurs. Ten Canada Business Service Centres across the country form the nodes. With the backing of our partners, they provide information and services tailored to the client – over the phone, face-to-face, through our Info-FAX service, and soon on an expanded CBSC Internet site.

This is the first issue of *InterConnexion*. It will keep you informed about:

- ▶ how CBSCs get information about your programs to Canadian business people;
- ▶ unique services offered by the CBSC centres;
- ▶ opportunities to enhance the delivery of your services.

InterConnexion is for our partners. If you have any comments, let us know. We want to make sure this newsletter works for you. Please see our response card on page 2.

Successful Products

Simplifying Information

The Business Information System (BIS) is like a carpenter's hammer – it is a key tool at the centre of our service.

It contains bilingual descriptions of over 700 business-related federal programs. Provincial information further enriches the collection.

The BIS organizes a complicated network of departments and partnerships. Entrepreneurs can research a business area without having to know which organizations manage it. Within seconds, a search under the keyword "exports", for example, will produce information on relevant programs and services and the contacts to call if more information is required.

"This unique, dynamic database has been essential to running a single window information service," says Vicki Kohse of

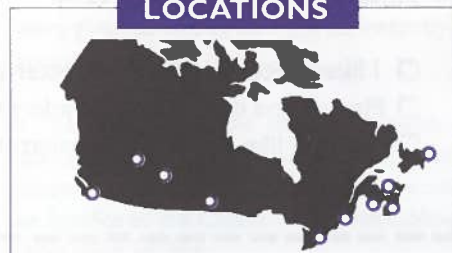
the CBSC National Secretariat.

The BIS is never static. It changes as programs are revised, ended and added. The CBSC partners have the critical task of seeing that our information is up to date.

BIS information is available from CBSC officers or through the popular Info-FAX service. Always evolving, it will soon be available on the Internet.

For more information contact: Vicki Kohse at (613) 954-4966.

LOCATIONS



Technology

CBSC On-Line

From their feedback, visitors to the Canada Business Service Centres Internet site are happy they found us.

"Thanks! You folks do a great job and provide excellent service," wrote Brent MacQuarrie from New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. But MacQuarrie also brought up what has been a recurring theme among our Internet guests.

Internet site will allow on-line document search

"It would be great to have the Info-FAX documents available in full text at your web site," he said.

Right now our site provides a list of business programs and services. If visitors want more details, they must have them faxed from their local Canada Business Service Centre. Internet users would rather have access to everything on-line.

They will soon get what they're looking for. An expanded web site that allows Internet visitors to search documents on-line will be in place by July, 1996.

Typing the word "Start-up" for instance, will generate a list of programs and services related to starting a business. Then with a click of the computer mouse, the full text of any one of those documents will appear on the screen.

Fast and paperless, electronic access promises to be popular.

Our Internet address is:

<http://info.ic.gc.ca/opengov.cbcs/>

For more information contact: Peter Cook at (613) 954-3541.

Technology

Faster Service

New computer software, Lotus Notes, is going to make it quicker and easier to give clients what they expect – one-stop shopping for information about government programs and services.

More time with clients means better service

Officers serving clients at Canada Business Service Centres have many computerized databases at their fingertips. Catalogues such as the Business Information System (BIS), trade data, and listings of a particular centre's library holdings, can all be mined for relevant material. Prior to Lotus Notes, each had to be searched separately.

Lotus Notes has changed all that, making searches faster and more efficient. With Lotus Notes:

- ▶ Entering keywords will begin a search of all databases simultaneously;
- ▶ Searches will be refined to target only relevant information;
- ▶ Government program updates will be easier for business service centres to share;
- ▶ The system will track clients and automatically generate user statistics.

"As an officer serving the public you want to spend a lot of time with your client, not filling out tracking forms," says Serge Pronovost, a member of the Lotus Notes implementation team.

And more time with clients means better service to business customers.

Lotus Notes has been installed across the country, and is being customized to suit each CBSC location.

For more information contact:
Tom Morris (613) 954-4036.

Partnerships

Cutting a Path

If ever there was a maze of regulations, it is the one that governs food. Growing and processing food is regulated federally by four departments: Industry Canada, Fisheries and Oceans, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Health Canada. Until recently, food producers ran the risk of innocently overlooking a regulation. Would they know, for instance, that three federal departments govern the labelling, packaging and food safety of cheese?

"We want to make sure people get to the right expert quickly and efficiently"

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has a solution – a computer database called the PATHfinder to Federal Food Inspection Services.

"People usually have questions about a food product," says Frank Massong, project manager at AAFC, "so we created a directory based on foods, like cheese, rather than on government organization."

If someone wants to produce cheese, the PATHfinder tells them the departments to contact and the phone numbers to call. For advice, the PATHfinder directs them to experts.

PATHfinder cuts through a maze of regulations

"We want to make sure people get to the right expert quickly and efficiently," Massong says.

AAFC has found an ideal partner in the Canada Business Service Centres. AAFC developed the PATHfinder and will keep it up to date. The CBCSs offer the information to clients as part of their "one-stop" service. It will be available on the Internet at <http://www.agr.ca/> in August 1996.

The next step, says Massong, is to see provincial partners add their regulations and contacts to the PATHfinder.

For more information contact:
Frank Massong at (613) 952-8000 ext. 4782.



What Do You Think?

If you have any comments about *InterConnexion* or Canada Business Service Centres please contact:

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How would you like your copy of *InterConnexion* delivered to you?

- I liked receiving the newsletter by FAX.
- Please send it to this e-mail address _____
- I would like a printed newsletter mailed to me.

Best Practices

Kudos for BC Workshop

An Internet workshop that spells out the ABCs of starting a small business is getting good reviews. The Canada/B.C. Business Service Centre's step-by-step guide teaches potential small business owners everything from product pricing to approaching banks for loans.

An internet workshop spells out the ABCs of starting a small business

"In less than one hour I was able to get information that through conventional channels would have taken weeks and many dollars," raved C. Osborne from Kincardine, Ontario in an e-mail note to the Canada/BC Business Service Centre after he discovered the On-Line Small Business Workshop on the Internet. "Although there are many sources of business information, none have given me so much, so quickly and so clearly presented."

The workshop unfolds logically. A click of the mouse takes the user into ever more detailed layers of information. For example, clicking on the heading *Evaluating Your Ideas* reveals a 20 step list. Click on Step 1, *Create a Profile of Your Paying Customer*, to get full instructions.

The workshop is also filled with fresh ideas to promote business, research the market, forecast sales and gauge the competition. The workshop ends with instructions for writing a good business plan, a prerequisite for getting a bank loan.

"Your work has saved me money and time," Osborne went on. "My project is weeks ahead of schedule..."

In this era of information overload, it's encouraging to see the Internet used to simplify something as complicated as starting a business.

"In less than one hour I was able to get information that through conventional channels would have taken weeks"

To visit the On-Line Small Business Workshop, go to:

<http://www.sb.gov.bc.ca/>
and choose the *Workshop* option.

For more information contact: Len Hartley at (604) 775-5571 or e-mail: hartleyl@vancbsc.ic.gc.ca

In Our September Issue

Hot topics: The questions clients ask most often.

CBSC Success Story: A Vancouver shop where pet owners come to bathe their animals is getting franchise requests after only 3 months in business.

Partnerships: How Foreign Affairs and International Trade helps CBSCs provide trade information.

HIGHLIGHTS

► The Globe and Mail (Mar.15/96) says the CBSCs are "...the quickest way to pick up government information". Top marks were given to Info-FAX - "...free, instantly accessible".

► The CBSC was one of eight international recipients of a "best of class" case study award at the 2nd Annual Summit on Service to the Citizen in Denver, Colorado, (Feb.28/96).

Best Practices

Under One Roof

Several economic development agencies in Sydney, Nova Scotia are sparing clients the run-around by moving in together.

The Cape Breton County Economic Development Authority, Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, Access Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Economic Renewal Agency and Coastal Business Opportunities Inc. are now located in one building. The Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre (CNSBC) is supporting the venture by electronically co-locating with the Sydney group – they will provide Cape Breton with electronic access to the computerized catalogue of over 700 federal programs and services and its resource library. Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation is responsible for the delivery of ACOA Programs in Cape Breton and also for the Business Service Centre.

"A client dealing with any part of that network should have access to the whole thing," says Mel Coombs, director of the Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre in Halifax.

For clients, the joint location means:

- Convenient access to a range of services in one location;
- Personal service in their own community;
- Access to CNSBSC resources and expertise;
- Fewer phone calls.

"We want to avoid clients having to explain their whole situation over the phone more often than they have to," says Phyllis Yhard, Manager, Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre Cape Breton Satellite Office.

Most important, the joint location gives Cape Breton entrepreneurs the option of dealing with business advisors face-to-face.

For more information contact: Phyllis Yhard (902)564-2968 or Mel Coombs (902) 426-4820.