

# InterConnexion

A newsletter for partners in Canada Business Service Centres

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*Best Practices*

## Launderdog



Last year, Ward Bingham walked into the Canada/British Columbia Business Service Centre with a hot idea and no business experience. Now, ten months after opening Launderdog, a combination do-it-yourself dog grooming centre, pet supply store and doggy playschool, business is great and Bingham is setting up franchises.

He gives the CBSC top marks for the help and advice it offered him, a business novice.

**"At the Centre you don't have to know what questions to ask. They know what to give you"**

"The difference between the Business Service Centre and trying to find information at a library is that at the Centre you don't have to know what questions to ask. They know what to give you."

C/BCBSC staff gave Bingham information on taxes, incorporation, trademarks, mistakes new business people commonly make and how to research his market. Most important, they provided a constructive critique of his business plan. Bingham's first plan showed a love of dogs, one CBSC business service officer told him, but it didn't contain any of the business detail that would convince a bank to lend him money.

Bingham started again. C/BCBSC staff unearthed newspaper and magazine articles about dogs and their owners. They

directed Bingham to the C/BCBSC statistician who found information about spending patterns in the Vancouver neighbourhoods where he was thinking of opening shop. They told him about the Business Development Bank of Canada which makes loans to small business.

Meanwhile, Bingham did his own exhaustive market research. Five months later, he had a dazzling business plan that not only sold his idea, but laid out every problem he was likely to encounter.

"The problems that I have had since I've opened I have been able to handle because of the plan," Bingham says.

**It wasn't long before franchise requests started coming in**

The unique business got early publicity when Canadian Press published a story about it. Before long franchise requests started coming in. But Bingham wasn't caught by surprise. His business plan included franchising; his success has simply put him two years ahead of schedule.

*National News*

## I Can't See a Difference

If you were to ask clients which officers at a Canada Business Service Centre were federal employees and which were provincial, they probably wouldn't know. In fact, employees themselves hardly notice a difference. Staff are seconded from provincial, federal and private sector agencies but they work as a team.

**Officers are united by shared expertise and the desire to serve clients**

"The only difference between us is who issues our pay cheques," says Carol Conway of Info entrepreneurs in Montreal.

Officers are united by shared expertise and the desire to serve clients.

They learn together how to use the latest research tools, from traditional libraries to computerized databases.

"Our training has been superb. It has really brought us together as a team," says Charlotte Sutcliffe of the British Columbia/Canada Business Service Centre.

The result is a model partnership that delivers innovative services to all Canadians.

**We're on line!**

Visit InterConnexion at:  
<http://reliant.ic.gc.ca:88/interconnexion/english>

*Technology*

## Linked On Line

The Canada Business Service Centre's Internet site is growing. In June, the CBSC launched the Business Information System, an electronic catalogue of business related federal programs and services, on the Internet.

Now visitors to the site can search for information that used to be available only through Canada Business Service Centres. With a click of the computer mouse, they can search for and read the full text of more than 600 documents covering business topics from Agriculture to Transportation.

### In June, the CBSC launched the Business Information System on the Internet

What's more, the CBSC site is becoming a doorway to the Internet universe through its built-in links to other sites of interest to small and medium business. Eventually the CBSC will have hundreds of links, giving business people access to an ever expanding world of information.

The site also includes provincial information from New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island. Plans are underway to include databases from other regions as well.

Of course, the Internet is only one way to get CBSC information. Clients can still call or visit regional offices or order documents through the popular fax-on-demand service.

It all adds up to a seamless and versatile information network to serve clients better.

To access the BIS, visit the CBSC site at: <http://reliant.ic.gc.ca/english/fedbis/index.html>

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

*Partnerships*

## A Formula for Success

The business world of the future will rely increasingly on strong links between the private sector and various levels of government, according to Maurice Kaspy, a team leader at Info entrepreneurs in Montreal. Info entrepreneurs, a joint venture between the Board of Trade of Greater Montreal and the governments of Quebec and Canada, has created just such a link.

**"The board of trade was involved in developing the Info entrepreneurs project right from the beginning"**

"The board of trade was involved in developing the Info entrepreneurs project right from the beginning," says Kaspy, "and this in turn assured the ongoing support of the Montreal business community."

Info entrepreneurs remains the only regional Business Service Centre in Canada to benefit from such a partnership.

"It is these regular and privileged links which allow Info entrepreneurs to be in the forefront of developments and to be ready to provide the information needed by its clientele," adds Yvan Deslauriers, director of Info entrepreneurs.

Info entrepreneurs acts as a focal point for information on the range of services and programs offered to businesses by both the private and public sectors. It gives business people access to a library, an electronic database, and business-related statistics. The information helps clients start new ventures, establish business plans, learn about national and international regulations and find new customers and markets.

The Centre's success would have been impossible without the involvement of all three founding partners, but what makes Info entrepreneurs unique is its relationship with the Board of Trade of Greater Montreal and, through its private sector network, the Board's 7000 members.

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For more information contact Yvan DesLauriers: 1-800-322-4636 or (514) 496-4636.

## Top 5 Questions

These are the questions CBSC clients ask most often:

- ▶ How do I start my business?
- ▶ How do I register my business?
- ▶ Are there sources of funding for my business?
- ▶ How do I find suppliers?
- ▶ What programs will help me export/import goods?

## Best practices

## Managing a Busy Call Centre



A thousand times a day, the phones ring at the Ontario/Canada Business Call Centre. Yet there are no backlogs and no callers left waiting on hold for long. Managers keep everything humming along using a skilful blend of high-tech computer programs and old-fashioned customer service.

Call Centre team leader Richard Laurent uses software to track the number of calls at different times of day and to tell him how long callers wait for service.

**Only 5% of callers ever get a busy signal**

"That way I can tell how many agents I need answering phones between 10:00 and 10:30 Thursday morning," he says.

The automated system also compiles statistics about callers – what they ask, whether they are already in business or just starting out and whether they are new or repeat clients.

Laurent uses these statistics to make sure the Centre provides:

▶ **Prompt access.** Callers wait an average of seven seconds, or two telephone rings, before they connect with the Interactive Voice Messaging System, the self-serve InfoFax Service or an agent. By comparison, 18 seconds is the industry standard. Only five percent of callers ever get a busy signal, half the ten percent norm.

▶ **Accuracy.** From the time they are hired, information agents receive continuous training to enhance their skills and knowledge. Guest experts visit regularly to share their experience. Agents keep abreast of the latest government programs and electronic databases. Supervisors monitor calls to make sure officers provide up-to-date information.

▶ **Customer Service.** It is call centre policy to mail or fax information to clients the

day they request it, to conduct detailed research within 24 hours, and to devote as much time as needed to thoroughly and courteously answer callers' questions. And because the Centre handles all inquiries over the phone rather than in person, officers must have a flair for communicating without benefit of props, like books and charts.

**From the time they are hired, information agents receive continuous training to enhance their skills and knowledge**

"I strongly believe you have to have the right people behind the technology," says Laurent.

For more information, contact Mary Loughrin Lewis at (416) 952-0864.

We want to hear from you. If you have any comments about InterConnexion or Canada Business Service Centres please contact:

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## Partnerships

## DFAIT/CBSC Partnership

For some time, the InfoCentre run by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) has maintained a comprehensive database of departmental publications. People contact the InfoCentre to order consular information, market profiles, country profiles and information about exports and foreign policy.

Now, thanks to a partnership between DFAIT and Canada Business Service Centres, most CBSCs have been electronically linked to the DFAIT database, giving more clients access to this cutting edge information.

"Trade Commissioners abroad prepare profiles of particular market sectors and send them to us to distribute to Canadian exporters," says David Spicer, marketing officer for the DFAIT InfoCentre. "It is very fresh market intelligence."

The arrangement benefits both partners. DFAIT has found a way to get its information out to a wider market, while CBSC officers have a new source of valuable information to offer as part of their one-stop service.

But the biggest winners are CBSC clients.

For more information about the DFAIT InfoCentre contact David Spicer at (613) 944-1488.

### HIGHLIGHTS

The Canada/British Columbia Service Centre won the prestigious gold medal in the *Renewing Services and Program Delivery* category at the Government Technology Exhibition (GTEC) Awards Gala on September 16, 1996.

The judges noted in particular C/BCBSC's On-Line Small Business Workshop, a detailed step-by-step guide to starting a business located at the C/BCBSC's Internet web site.

You can visit the workshop at: <http://www.sb.gov.bc.ca/smallbus/sbhome.html>