

# InterConnexion

A newsletter for partners in Canada Business Service Centres

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## National News



### Infofairs A Hit

In every city where they opened, Industry Canada's one day business Infofairs had one surprising thing in common.

"The volume!" says Carole Tanner, information officer at the Saskatchewan-Canada Business Service Centre in Saskatoon. "There were waiting lines all day."

In Halifax, the doors were opened half an hour early to let in an ever-growing crowd. In Vancouver there were 45 minute waits all day long.

"We flew all day, it was great fun," laughs Canada/British Columbia Business Service Centre manager Liz Gilliland.

**"People were absolutely intrigued that there was so much information they could get instantly."**

In all, the Infofairs attracted 50,919 visitors in 29 locations. The biggest crowd was in Winnipeg, where attendance peaked at 5,409. The fairs were organized by Industry Canada to highlight federal programs and services that affect the business community.

In every location, Canada Business Service Centres hosted the first booth people saw after walking through the door. Like they do at the Centres, staff provided a first-stop service, answering questions about federal and provincial programs, and directing visitors to appropriate booths for more information about exports, financing and other business issues.

In Vancouver, where staff set up computer terminals linked to the Business Information System, the on-line catalogue of federal and provincial programs and services, hundreds of visitors saw for the first time the range of information the CBCSCs offer.

"People were absolutely intrigued that there was so much information they could get instantly," Liz Gilliland says.

Mel Coombs, manager of the Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre, was encouraged by the public's interest in what the government has to offer.

In Toronto, where Call-Centre staff only talk to clients over the phone, the Infofair was a chance to meet face-to-face.

Says Allen Anderson, director of the Canada/Ontario Business Service Centre: "The excitement people have about their business ideas really gave us a boost."

**We're online!**

Visit *InterConnexion* at  
<http://cbsc.org>:  
88/interconnexion

## Best Practices

### Team Canada Teleconnection

On February 24, 1997 Industry Canada and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) launched a toll-free phone service to complement a special Team Canada supplement that appeared in 11 national magazines and on the Internet.

Rather than build the service from scratch, DFAIT consulted with Industry Canada to link existing systems, providing callers with seamless access to Canada Business Service Centres and the DFAIT InfoCentre.

The Team Canada magazine supplement profiled entrepreneurs who participated in the January Team Canada trade mission, highlighting the doors opened to them and the deals they made. The objective was to illustrate how Canadian small business can enter export markets.

The toll-free number advertised in the supplement connected callers to Enquiries Canada, a fee-for-service call-centre contracted to answer calls. Agents took orders for small business and export guides and, depending on what clients wanted, referred callers or connected them directly to their provincial CBSC or the DFAIT InfoCentre.

"This campaign showed how quickly several partners could create and launch a customer service," said Fay Kristensen of DFAIT. "Two weeks after starting we had set up the line, trained the operators, and prepared CBSC and InfoCentre staff."

## Partnerships

## Competition Bureau Reaches Small Business

The Canada Business Service Centres and the Competition Bureau, Industry Canada's scam watchdog, are working together to help business people comply with competition laws and protect themselves from fraud artists.

The Competition Bureau has provided the CBSCs with educational videos and a series of pamphlets to give to clients. The to-the-point pamphlets include titles like *Bid-Rigging, Pyramid Selling and Multi-level Marketing Schemes*, and *Deceptive Telemarketing*.

The Competition Bureau is also sending members of its Speakers Bureau to meet with CBSC staff. To date, they have visited Winnipeg, Vancouver, Halifax and Saskatoon.

Diana Matsuda, manager of the Saskatchewan-Canada Business Service Centre, says a meeting with the Competition Bureau gave her staff a much clearer idea of the agency's role in investigating unfair business practices.

"The questions our clients ask run a wide gamut, so the more we understand about what our partners do, the better able we are to direct them to the right people for information," she says.

Matsuda says this kind of seminar, which she tries to arrange often, also gives CBSC partners a better idea of the service her Centre provides.

It is a simple yet effective strategy that benefits staff, clients and the business community. ♦



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

## CBSC in Alberta - The Business Link

**A**t the Business Link in Edmonton, partnership is key. Right now, the Business Link is the only member of the Canada Business Service Centre network built on a funding partnership between all three levels of government — Western Economic Diversification, the federal partner, Economic Development and Tourism, representing the Government of Alberta, and Economic Development Edmonton, the municipal partner.

The partners' goal is to provide people with client-focused, seamless service.

**The Business Link is built on a funding partnership between all three levels of government...**

"Clients don't always know which level of government is responsible for what service," says general manager, Holly Palmer. "All they want to do is start a business the easiest way possible."

Co-located with The Business Link is the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, which reviews development projects affecting the environment, and the Alberta Women's Enterprise Initiative.

The Business Link recently engineered another type of partnership. In March, it launched a program to give clients access

to experts from the financial sector. Once a week, a guest advisor from one of six financial institutions is on hand to answer questions from clients who phone or visit the Centre. It gives clients a chance to get expert advice before they approach their own bankers with business plans. And to enhance this service, The Business Link recently hosted a "Bankers Bazaar", a mini trade show with presentations featuring representatives from the banking community.

**Once a week, a guest advisor from one of six financial institutions is on hand to answer questions...**

Both initiatives exemplify the kind of "win-win" relationships The Business Link will continue to pursue.

### Openings

The newest member of the Canada Business Service Centre network officially opened its doors in Whitehorse on April 9, 1997. The Canada-Yukon Business Service Centre is funded by a three-way partnership between the Federal government, the Territorial government and the Yukon Chamber of Commerce. The walk-in centre offers business counselling, access to a reference

library, and the popular toll-free Info-Fax service. On hand for the ribbon-cutting ceremony were Trevor Harding, the Yukon's Minister of Economic Development, Mr. John Carroll, President of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, and Dr. Brian Anderson of Industry Canada-Pacific Region, who read a message from the Honourable John Manley.

## Best Practices

## Home-based Publisher Launches National Magazine

Until a helpful friend told her about the Canada-Saskatchewan Business Service Centre toll-free number, Cheryl Carlson-Lewis was racking up hefty long distance bills trying to find information about launching a new business. Not knowing where to start, she had been calling government departments in cities far from her home in Rocanville, Saskatchewan. But none of them had what she was looking for.

"When you live in rural Saskatchewan you can't access all the resources that are available in the city," Carlson-Lewis says. "That's the wonderful thing about a 1-800 number and the Fax on demand service."



and craft associations to approach for advice. They searched for competitors in the National

Directory of Magazines and the National Directory of Catalogues. They found a study of the Canadian mail order market that helped Carlson-Lewis assess the two markets she was looking at: people who sell and people who buy through catalogues.

Information officers also directed her to supplier information so Carlson-Lewis could find the professionals she needed to layout, print and distribute the magazine.

**After her first call to the Centre, staff mailed Carlson-Lewis a business start-up kit...**

Carlson-Lewis has just published the stylish first issue of *Canadian Country Homecraft Showcase*, a glossy, full-colour magazine offering a place for small, Canadian producers to market their crafts. Craft people pay to have their goods beautifully photographed and presented. People who buy the magazine can then order goods, everything from high-end, one-of-a-kind quilts to home made beef jerky, directly from the producer.

After her first call to the Canada-Saskatchewan Business Service Centre, staff mailed Carlson-Lewis a business start-up kit that posed all the questions an entrepreneur has to answer — do you have what it takes to be an entrepreneur; what is a business plan; how do you arrange financing? Now knowing what questions to ask, Carlson-Lewis turned to the Centre a dozen times with ever more focused requests.

The staff provided lists of craft shops

**...Carlson-Lewis turned to the Centre a dozen times with ever more focused requests.**

The premier Fall/Winter issue, produced by a staff of four, including Carlson-Lewis, made its debut in September. Twelve thousand copies of the Spring/Summer issue have just hit store shelves. In addition there is a small but growing number of subscribers.

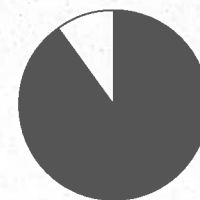
"She came out with such a good product," says Cathy MacDonald, one of the information officers who helped Carlson-Lewis. "It is really satisfying to see what she has done." ♦

## National News

## Microbusiness Snapshot

An increasing number of Canada Business Service Centre clients are joining the fastest growing business sector in Canada—microbusiness, small businesses run by self-employed entrepreneurs with fewer than five employees. What does the sector look like?

- ◆ Ninety per cent of all businesses registered in Canada employ fewer than five people.
- ◆ Two-thirds of independently employed people are men.
- ◆ Thirty-one per-cent of self-employed women work part-time.
- ◆ The average age of the self-employed is 42.
- ◆ Among the self-employed, the fastest growth has been in the areas of finance, insurance and real estate, and services.



Number of businesses with fewer than 5 employees



Sources:

Entrepreneurship and Small Business Office, Industry Canada.

Their Own Boss, Canadian Social Trends, Statistics Canada, Summer 1995.