

# InterConnexion

A newsletter for partners in Canada Business Service Centres

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## Toast of the Town: Vinland Wine Racks



Newfoundland entrepreneur Bruce Campbell says the help he got from the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Business Service Centre was indispensable in his bid to establish a unique line of stackable wooden wine racks that is making a spirited debut in North America.

Without the Centre, Campbell says, "I don't think it would have happened, because everything becomes an obstacle."

Since 1995, the Centre has guided Campbell through starting up, patent protection, expansion, and entry into the export market, as Vinland Wine Racks has grown from a part-time hobby to a six-person enterprise, selling more than 6000 units in 1996.

Eager to produce and sell the unique wine rack he had invented at home, Campbell first contacted the Centre in January 1995, looking for information that would help him protect his design.

**"It was a tremendous help," he says. Without the Centre, "it would have taken a lot longer."**

"Anything you wanted to know about, they were prepared to answer," said Campbell, recalling the deluge of information he acquired. Everything from patent applications, background on the wine industry, listings of Canadian and American wine rack manufacturers and suppliers and trade shows, to sources of funds for marketing, how to start a business and bar coding.

To quench Campbell's thirst for information, the Centre siphoned data from numerous sources, including the CBSC's Business Information System (BIS), the Internet, NAFTA documents, Program for Export Market Development publications, and several trade and industry databases. Besides the information available in-house, the Centre pointed him to information from the National Research Council, the Business Development Bank, Memorial University, the Universal Product Code Council and the University of Waterloo's Innovation Centre. Centre staff also put Campbell on to the Canadian Intellectual Property Office in Halifax, his key contact for obtaining a patent before he could set up his business.

"It was a tremendous help," he says. Without the Centre, "it would have taken a lot longer." ♦

**We're online!**

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

## CBSC Regulatory Research Project

With so many regulations to sort through, it's no wonder that in a recent evaluation, 79 per cent of CBSC clients said they wanted regulatory information in a format they could understand and apply to their business situation.

Complying with regulations is easier if the "rules and requirements" are clear at the outset. The solution? The CBSC Regulatory Research Project — a prototype database that combines business-related regulatory information from 25 federal departments and agencies. So far, the database contains more than 200 entries, running the gamut from approvals and registrations to licences, permits and certificates, with contact names and numbers, all in plain language signed off by the responsible departments and agencies.

Work started last year, when Centre managers flagged this information gap and the project received national support. This fall, the collection of regulations will be added to the Business Information System (BIS), a database with more than 700 bilingual descriptions of federal business-related programs. The BIS helps front-line information officers quickly identify applicable regulations and the department or agency responsible so an accurate, efficient referral can be made.

Once tested by staff and integrated into the BIS, the regulatory database will also be available directly to clients through self-serve modes on the Internet and toll-free fax-on-demand. ♦

## A Front-line Anti-dumping Brigade

What do CBSCs and cheap imports have in common? Lots, now that Revenue Canada's Denis Michaud, Senior Policy Officer at Revenue Canada's Anti-dumping and Countervailing Directorate, has been talking to CBSC staff across the country. Results have been encouraging.

To protect Canadian producers, the directorate investigates allegations of dumping and export subsidization and is authorized under Canada's *Special Import Measures Act (SIMA)* to impose anti-dumping or countervailing duties on offending imports if a tribunal finds injury to Canadian producers. The problem, says Michaud, is that despite recent increases in two-way trade, only 40 to 50 inquiries from Canadian producers are received each year. Of those, only 6 to 8 become formal complaints. Why? A lack of information about the protection available.

"We had virtually no visibility in the provinces. By the time complainants found us, they'd had quite the runaround," recalls Michaud.

Since the CBSCs are the first point of contact for many small businesses, they seemed the obvious conduit for information about SIMA. Since April, Michaud has given dozens of presentations, to staff at the CBSCs and provincial government officials of ministries that deal with small and medium-sized enterprises, economic development and trade. The pay-off has already started with a noticeable increase in referrals to the Directorate. "It's fantastic in such a short a turn-around time!"

"With all the cuts to government, I think it's really important that we combine our efforts to reach the private sector, sharing information as much as possible and helping each other," says Michaud, "and CBSCs are a great way to do just that." ♦

## Business Planning at your Fingertips

Gone are the days when potential entrepreneurs had to gather armloads of information on what they needed to write a business plan. The B.C.—Canada Centre is conducting a pilot project that has put the Interactive Business Planner at their fingertips. Also known as IBP, this business planning software — an Internet first — walks clients step by step through a business plan.

Since its launch in April, the planner has been garnering nothing but rave reviews.

"We have received so much positive feedback it's unbelievable," says Heather Lehmann, the project manager at the Centre.

It's making CBSC clients look good too. One bank official who evaluates business plans for the loan officer was impressed that a client had built the cost of inflation into her business plan. IBP's inflation prompt is just one of its many interactive features. Lehmann says, "She said if she hadn't had the IBP she wouldn't have thought to do this."

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Because of the research involved, many clients need assistance preparing a business plan. Being able to plan for best- and worst-case scenarios calls for a lot of digging. But it's perhaps most daunting for those starting up a new venture. It has to be done right if the business plan is to convince lenders that an idea is sound.

To help clients get past the stage fright of getting started, IBP offers industry-specific

sample plans. As it leads them through the template, the planner generates financial projections based on information they have input and offers 'hot buttons' linked to specialized databases and useful web sites.

The research links are a real time-saver. A woman who had already written her business plan told Lehmann that, had she used IBP, "it would have taken her about half the time to write her business plan because of the usefulness of the links."

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By late fall 1997, IBP will be a national product, available in both official languages and with sample plans tailored to each province. E-mail support will be available from any Centre in Canada.

A working model of IBP is accessible at <http://www.sb.gov.bc.ca/>. Clients will also be able to access it through any Centre's Web site.

For more information, contact Heather Lehmann at (604) 775-5534. ♦



## Tools

### ExportSource

The *ExportSource*, the latest on-line tool promoted by the CBSCs, brings a world of trade information to the customer's desk, through a single Internet Web site. Developed for clients eyeing markets beyond our borders, the *ExportSource* is a valuable resource for prospective, new and established exporters. Information is organized based on client input, and subject links and search engines give the client instant access to related material without a lot of digging.

The database offers guides on preparing to export, planning business trips, preparing for trade shows, responding to unsolicited orders, and bidding on international contracts. It also gives details on foreign markets, trade statistics, export financing, trade shows and where to turn for extra assistance.

The address for the *ExportSource* database is <http://exportsource.gc.ca>. For clients without Internet access, the Centres provide public access terminals with *ExportSource* bookmarked or they can refer callers to public access Internet in their communities. ♦

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

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# STRETCHING the CBSC Network

By the year 2000, Canadians will be able to walk into 370 new CBSC access points across Canada, thanks to a new initiative recently approved by the Treasury Board. The plan is to increase public access to accurate and comprehensive information on federal programs, services, regulations and sources of strategic business information by means of cooperative agreements with existing organizations.

Although the CBSCs already provide province-wide access to information through the toll-free telephone and fax-on-demand services, as well as borderless access through [www.cbsc.org](http://www.cbsc.org), their walk-in service is accessible only to those living nearby. Now, through cooperative arrangements and a large dose of technology, the CBSCs are expanding their storefront footage without laying new bricks and mortar.

The goal of this expansion is to use existing infrastructure to increase the visibility of, and access to, federal programs and services that target the business community.

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To stretch that storefront space, the CBSC network is "reaching out" to other organizations already in the business of helping small businesses start up and flourish — economic development, rural and community future corporations, federal and provincial district offices with business clients, chambers of commerce, and others.

Under the expanded network, CBSCs will share their excellent resources and databases with these other organizations, making the tools and skills of the Centres available to communities outside the current locations. The Centres will even provide training and research support to their new colleagues. And, with access to CBSC resources, existing organizations can spend more time offering their clients seminars, counselling and other face-to-face services, and less time digging for information on federal programs and services.

Already, several pilot access points are operating across the country. By the end of the year, 190 new CBSC access points will be up and running, and 180 more will be ready in 1998-99. ♦