

INTERFACE

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CIO: supporting the electronic distribution of information

A new kind of service group has been created at Industry Canada.

The CIO is a name that will become familiar to *Interface* readers. It is the name for the new group that is made up of the Information Technology Branch, the Strategic Information Branch, the Canada Business Service Centre National Secretariat (CBSC — see “Partnership care and service delivery,” page 3) and the Strategic Direction and Planning group. The CIO will be led by Chief Information Officer Grant Westcott.

This organization is a logical extension of the department’s commitment to develop world-class electronic information products for business clients, explains Grant. “We have combined in one place expertise in handling electronic technology, expertise in assembling

strategic information, and expertise in creating and managing a new organizational network to distribute information and to provide services to the business community.”

The CIO’s primary focus is service to departmental clients. What makes the CIO a new type of service group is that the reorganization of resources allows it to direct its efforts toward the overall goal of helping internal clients get information to external clients more effectively.

“Previously, departmental staff would approach the individual organizations that now make up the CIO to get help with specific needs. Unfortunately, these organizations were not positioned to help with the larger goal,” explains Grant. “The new group not only combines all the necessary services in one organization, but also allows these players to act as partners in developing and distributing information products.”

The organization will be responsible for

- creating development processes, distribution facilities and effectiveness measurement systems for all information products
- supporting the development of well-equipped and skilled teams within Industry Canada to manage information products, and providing these teams



NAME THAT 'TOON

Send us your ideas for a caption for this cartoon. Last issue’s winning caption is on page 4.

with all the information and technology they need to carry out their business

- the electronic “publishing” of information
- planning, financing and delivering products through the CBSCs.

The CIO will also provide product management for the Trade Statistics, Canadian Company Capabilities and NUANS information products.

A three-year business plan to combine all the components into the new, streamlined CIO group has been developed. This plan will ensure that the organization will focus its resources on the department’s new strategic priorities. ■

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INSIGHT: a good thing gets better



The INSIGHT series of electronic information products is moving ahead to cover more industry sectors and to be available in new formats.

Industry Canada has made a major commitment to further development of the product under the department's Information Products Strategy, including the creation of an INSIGHT team to provide coordinated production and marketing support to the sector branches assembling the information.

INSIGHT is a rich compendium of documents and data that help provide competitive advantage to Canadian companies, explains David Williamson, who is managing the INSIGHT product line. "The trick is in assembling and creating valuable information in a form useful to small and medium-sized enterprises and then finding the best method of getting this information into the client's decision-making process," says David. INSIGHT is available through a number of delivery channels ranging from diskette to CD-ROM and on-line over the emerging information highway.

To date, three INSIGHT products have been published on diskette dealing with chemicals and plastics, health industries and information technologies. Eventually, 12 more industry sectors will be covered.

A brand new "omnibus" INSIGHT^{Plus}, released on CD-ROM in June, covers all these sectors. It also features information

available through copublishing arrangements with private sector information providers and lets users gain access to telecommunication gateways to several Canadian on-line service providers.

All of the information available through INSIGHT is electronically linked to a table of contents that clients can use to navigate their way to specific sections and topics. In the CD-ROM and on-line versions, sophisticated search functions greatly increase the ease with which a business person can locate information.

The CD-ROM and on-line versions also include graphically displayed information, making them much more powerful than the text-only format of the diskette version. "Our goal is to provide information in forms appropriate to the technology our clients have, but, at the same time, we hope to be able to show them the advantages of more advanced technology and entice them into the world of electronic business," says David.

INSIGHT complements Industry Canada's other world-class electronic information products. It will, for example, be available to support departmental employees providing information to discussion groups in Electronic Conferences (see the last issue of *Interface*). There will also be links to other information products, such as the International Business Information Network, in the on-line version. "Someone using INSIGHT to look at the

Teams from the Spectrum, Information Technology and Telecommunications Industries Sector and the Industry Sector received Merit Awards in recognition of their work to produce the INSIGHT^{Plus} CD-ROM. The awards were presented by Kevin Lynch, Associate Deputy Minister (second from left), in a ceremony on June 15.

chemical industries sector will be able to jump to related trade information and then return to where they were in INSIGHT," explains David. ■

PROMOTING CANADIAN

Information about Canadian companies — from apple growers to zipper manufacturers — will soon be only a few keystrokes away.

The Canadian Company Capabilities electronic information product will promote the products, services and expertise of companies nation-wide. The primary clients for the database will be those wishing to buy products from, sell supplies to or form strategic alliances with these companies. The information will be available to the public either over the Internet's World Wide Web (WWW) or through a direct dial-in connection to Industry Canada's super server.

There will be two parts to the Canadian Company Capabilities database — "white pages" and "yellow pages." The white pages (which will be available on departmental officers' desktops) will offer basic data on

CBSC National Secretariat

Partnership care and service delivery

Robert Smith's current job as Director of the Canada Business Service Centre (CBSC) National Secretariat is unlike anything else he has done in government.

Keeping a network running in cooperation with other government departments and agencies, provincial governments and the private sector is more of an art form than a typical management task, he explains. "When you come to work here you have to check your corporate hat at the door."

Robert and his staff are responsible for keeping the partnership behind the CBSCs working. The National Secretariat reports to a management board with representatives from Treasury Board, Industry Canada and the three regional agencies responsible for the centres —

Quebec's Federal Office for Regional Development, the Western Economic Diversification Office and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

The Secretariat works for the CBSCs as much as for the board, adds Robert. "There is a tremendous advantage to the centres if they can keep working as a network rather than as 10 independent centres," he explains. "When it comes to service delivery, single organization approaches simply aren't the answer anymore."

To keep the various partners working as a group, the Secretariat organizes frequent meetings and acts as a national voice representing the CBSCs to organizations such as the Auditor General, parliamentary committees and business groups. It also helps increase efficiency by performing operations that make more

sense to do once centrally rather than for each CBSC to do individually.

Robert's team also coordinates the efforts of the 20 federal departments and agencies involved in the CBSCs to combine their information into a single corporate database. "We have no qualms about taking the best information we can get," says Robert. His staff are currently looking for employees from the departments and supporting agencies to join the Secretariat to help build the database.

In addition to being an information supplier, Industry Canada has provided invaluable technology support, adds Robert. "Just having the CBSCs linked through the departmental wide area network backbone is an incredible economy." ■

BUSINESS KNOW-HOW

every registered business in Canada, says Anne Clapperton, who is managing the development of Canadian Company Capabilities. "The yellow pages [which will be available to external clients on the super server] will feature more extensive information on 40 000-50 000 key companies."

The Canadian Company Capabilities working team includes staff from various industry sectors as well as the regions. Criteria for determining which companies will be listed in the yellow pages have been developed by the Coordination Special Analytic Service, says Anne. "These criteria will be used to identify companies that have strategic advantages such as the potential to expand into foreign markets or the ability to work with new technologies," she explains. A draft version of the criteria has been submitted to the Information Management Committee and forms the basis of discussions with

the department's sector branches that started in June.

The system will allow companies to include or link multimedia promotional material to the database. "Companies will be able to establish links between the database and their own on-line information,"

says Anne. "For example, it will be possible to leap from Canadian Company Capabilities to a firm's Home Page on the WWW."

Prototype versions of the white pages and yellow pages have been developed and were displayed at the Information Fair in June.

The system is geared to work with a broad range of technology (from VT100 upwards), allowing users of different degrees of sophistication to have access to the information. "At the same time, we would like to encourage users to explore more advanced technology because we believe this will be to their advantage," says Anne. ■



Canadian Company Capabilities' World Wide Web Home Page

Getting the news to the department... then the world

After hearing a lot about world-class electronic information products, Industry Canada employees have had a chance to see them.

An Info Fair at headquarters, followed by a regional information tour headed by David Waung, Director General, Strategic Information Branch, in the east and Chief Information Officer Grant Westcott in the west, was held in late June and early July to show all employees the progress that has been made on the product line. "In the last little while, this work has been known only to people directly involved," says

David. "Information products are going to be a big part of how the department works in the future. These fairs expand the circle to include everyone."

The fairs will also make it easier for employees to inform their business clients about the new departmental initiative. "Attendees got a chance to actually use product prototypes," says David. "They will now be able to explain these products to their clients in more concrete terms."

There were two sections to the Info Fair. The first featured an outline of the vision behind the information products and the

resources being committed to their development. "Most importantly, we were able to show people our Information Map, which shows how the products fit into the department's overall structure," says David.

The second part of the show allowed the development teams behind the world-class electronic information products to display the results of their efforts. Product prototypes and related technology were on display as well as information about new processes developed to make the products possible. ■

NEW GENERATION OF WORDPROCESSORS OFFERS INCREASED CAPABILITIES

Wordprocessors aren't what they used to be. The latest Windows-based wordprocessors can do much more than their DOS predecessors.

Windows wordprocessors give users far greater capability to see what the documents they produce will look like on screen. They allow staff to do tasks on their desktops, such as importing graphics created in other programs or using multiple fonts, that were very difficult in the DOS version of WordPerfect.

People will find that they can do presentations themselves without having to resort to outside help.

Another advantage of software used with Windows is the ease with which different programs can be used together. Elements such as charts or illustrations created in a number of different programs

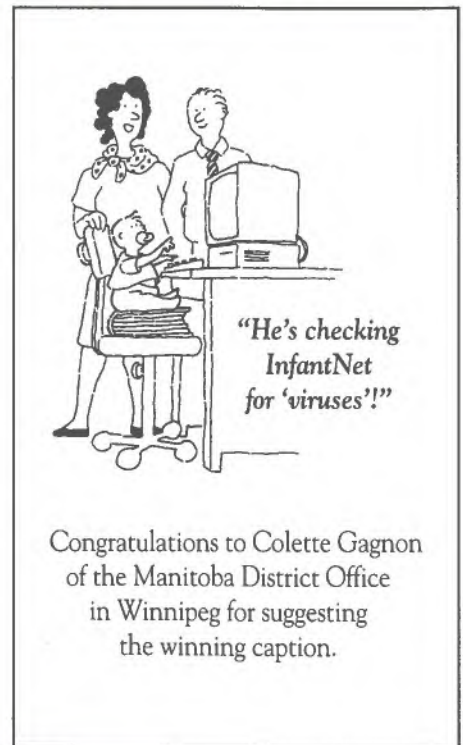
can be easily imported into a document created on a wordprocessor.

It is these extra capabilities that make it worthwhile to invest the time to learn the new software. Many people, however, will find it a challenge working without familiar features such as the "reveal codes" toggle.

Learning how to use the new software may not be easy. Even those with very high levels of software experience may still find it difficult to make the transition. While Windows-based software is initially easy to learn, it can be difficult to master.

The task may be made simpler if people share their knowledge with colleagues. Windows is very visual so it allows a user to see how something is done on screen rather than having to struggle through a manual. ■

Contest Winner!



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Please E-mail your comments, suggestions or story ideas to (INTERFACE) or mail them to: *Interface* Editor, Industry Canada, Room 340F, West Tower, 235 Queen Street, OTTAWA, Ont., K1A 0H5.

