



LEADERSHIP ACUMEN

Issue 3 - October, 2002

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Sustaining Canada as a Trading Nation – *Plus* - Injecting FUN Back Into WORK

With 31 million plus people, the second largest land mass rich with natural resources, and one of the highest educated societies on the planet, Canada is very blessed and enjoys huge potential for future prosperity. This has however, allowed us to remain somewhat insular, while often taking our good fortune for granted. Today, “value” shifts in society, the internationalization of business, and new developments, such as the Kyoto Accord, are challenging us to let go of the familiar. Tomorrow, we must find new ways of creating value, better approaches to exporting our products and services, and enhanced safety of our community while sharing our wealth with others less fortunate.

We must start now, a major proactive transition toward new intellectual capital-based industries and services before we get caught in the down slope of current/traditional economy-based product/value lifecycles.

A Past Reliance on Resource-based Products

Since before confederation, Canada’s natural resources, be they furs, oil and gas, nickel, lumber/paper, or Alberta beef; have been the key source for enhancing the prospects of our nation. In the next decade or so, the “value” of many of these commodities will be hard to sustain. Cheaper supplies from developing nations, arguably less concerned about environmental issues, has already affected nickel, oil and changing attitudes. Legislation and expectations around sustainable practices are changing the nature of fishing, lumber and paper industries, and will continue to affect our practices in mining, electricity generation and more.

There are few markets remaining for uncontrollable growth in the sales of consumer goods like microwave ovens, heavy gas-powered vehicles, telecom switches and other traditional manufactured items. Maturation of markets for these traditional items and raw materials has already reduced margins and threatened viability of businesses that focus on the basic product as the main source of value.

Going Forward – Knowledge Products and Services

Canada’s future economic platform and success internationally will require a further, more significant shift towards knowledge industries and services.

This has particular implications for leadership, governance and government. Rather than fighting movements such as Kyoto, let’s embrace innovation to leverage our efforts. Rather than propping-up the old economy, let’s get busy supporting and stimulating new ingenuity and knowledge-based products and services. Rather than looking inward, let’s get our next generation of leaders networking outside our current sectoral boundaries and exploring/learning about the evolving international markets.

This kind of exploration will even further feed and inform our innovation processes.

Let’s “connect” our youth, find a way to keep our brightest talent here in Canada while attracting others from afar. Let’s seriously prepare Canada for the coming international “battle of the minds”.

Re-thinking Brand Canada

What is Canada's "brand identity" today? (Test it next time you are outside Canada).

Components include:

- Clean
- Honest
- Wilderness
- Democratic
- Natural Resources & Open Spaces
- Respectful of Diversity
- "Like Americans, but less aggressive and arrogant"
- Great Musicians

Not bad components of image, but not really economically referenced. We really have kept our bright lights hidden.

Statistics from Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (2nd Quarter 2002 Report) show the following:

- Trade to USA has been maintained steadily at about 87% over the past 3-4 years
- Japan, U.K. Germany have slipped somewhat
- China, Middle East and Central America are increasing

[We are, however, clearly dependent on the American economy and not very well diversified or adventurous!]

- Mining, agriculture, forestry, fishing, industrial and automotive exports have slid in value consistently over the past 3 years.
- Construction, finance, insurance, information and cultural industries, professional services, scientific and technical services have all been growing consistently over 3 years.

[Clearly, the shift is toward the knowledge-based industries.]

Let's consider a future Canadian Branding which includes elements such as:

- Inventive and creative
- "A place where I can reach my potential"
- Trustworthy, honest, transparent
- A centre for ingenuity (i.e. biotechnology, software design)
- Health care leadership and management
- Brokers of international geo-political co-operation and justice
- Educators to the world
- At forefront of alternative energy/environmental services
- Governance and democracy systems experts
- Knowledge networks, and, oh yes,
- Pure water products

Perhaps surprising to some people, we already have the roots established for the above. However, we really must invest in and support international growth in these areas – now.

Government policy, corporate and government investment, social encouragement and prioritization are, of course, important for success. And, each of us can be active at the local/personal level. We can lead our organizations' youth and the upcoming generation of leaders to build their creative capacities, to get out and explore foreign markets to become more networking/collaboration oriented.

This innovation-based export orientation is not just restricted to corporations/ entrepreneurial companies such as SNC Lavalin, Bombardier, Novo Pharm, Interhealth, Alliance Atlantis Communications, and AXIA Netmedia who have already built a reputation – or the new ones to follow.

Our not-for-profit and association sector can be more inventive and export-oriented as well. For example, The Canadian Diabetes Association has for years been a leading force within the world Diabetes and health sectors. The Canadian Certified Management Accountants Association has established CMA standards and education services in Europe and Asia. Some of our Aboriginal communicates and organizations are actively exporting their expertise internationally.

Being a Canadian organization doesn't mean you have to focus only in Canada. Increasingly, many high-value, ethical, global niches exist and will be created for us to capture and from which to create economic advantage for Canadians.

Water is going to become the "oil and gas" of the next decade. Indeed, it is already selling for higher prices per litre than gas. Current estimates are that 20 – 25% of the world's fresh water supply lies within Canada's borders. Others who need it will want it from us. We need a national debate and strategy on water right now. Private companies and foreign interests are already lobbying for distribution rights from our rivers, lakes and icebergs. Government appears significantly confused on the issue.

We could have the debates about water and its export – who controls it, who benefits (individual or Canadian Society at large), whether we profit from it, or have an obligation to share it as a not-for-profit global resource.

Or, we could move from this primary level - focusing on water as the product – and advance to an even higher-level conversation:

How can Canadian ingenuity and knowledge, lever this scarce resource to create even higher value products and services for the world?

Potential high-value, pure-water products might include: hardier grain, energy, global inoculation and medicine delivery systems, environmentally-friendly fuel, and more.

Even our social/media dialogues need to be more inspired!

Canada's future social standing and economic prosperity is directly linked to our ability to remain and expand our capacity as a trading nation. We must nurture and enhance our innovation practices. We must also enhance our understanding of and ability to reach export markets in a much more diversified pattern than today.

As a result, senior leaders in all sectors have a responsibility to increase their capacity for supporting both innovation and international exploration together - ensuring the next generation of leaders are prepared to pit their minds against the best the rest of the world will offer up.

Injecting F.U.N. back into W-O-R-K

The past year has been pretty tough in the workplaces of the world. 9/11 shattered our psyches. The economic downturn shattered families and communities as thousands were laid-off. The breeches of integrity, trust and fair play by too many senior political and corporate leaders, shattered our confidence in leadership and our retirement savings.

Workers in general are on the edge.

So, as a leader, what are you doing about it? Improved productivity, creativity, collaboration, confidence, trust, and ultimately, profitability/sustainability require dynamic, yet caring leadership like never before.

- F - Fitness
- U - Understanding
- N - Nurturing of ideas and motivation

This needs the attention of our senior leaders – you.

The above elements are pretty self-evident, and most senior leaders do know what to do about them. Let's get to it!

Exploring the Web!

<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/menu-en.asp>

Home site to Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. It has many statistics and information to support your organization in expanding its international profile.

<http://www.infoexport.gc.ca/ie-en/MarketReportsAndServices.jsp>

Information on how to better export your products and services – including financial assistance and educational programs.

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org>

<http://www.nationalgeographic.ca>

Two links to both inform and entertain you about the world beyond our borders. Return frequently!

<http://www.dilbert.com>

Inject (carefully) some good fun in the workplace. Go to "Games" and try out the random mission statement generator or Performance Review generator!

<http://www.despair.com>

Many of us are familiar with "Successories" and their motivational prints, cups and paraphernalia. Despair.com gives this approach a sarcastic twist. Please just look, don't send me any!

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