

Canadian Innovation Awards 2004-2005

Development of Export Sales for SMEs

Fabricant de Poêles International inc. – Stove Builders International (SBI)

SBI specializes in the engineering, production, and marketing of high efficiency zone heating equipment, including EPA wood stoves, wood fireplace inserts, high efficiency gas stoves and gas fireplace inserts. From design to final assembly, SBI uses the latest technology to ensure that its products meet the highest quality standards.

Company President Marc-Antoine Cantin says the Canadian Innovation Award is an important recognition for SBI. "We always question whether we have the right strategy because exporting to another country is not that easy. Being recognized for our exceptional growth in export sales confirms to us that we are on the right track. We always set higher goals for ourselves, and it is nice when we are told that what we have achieved is already significant."

Cantin sums up the approach that led to SBI's export success thusly: "We use a very simple approach to develop export sales. We identify key markets, travel there to meet potential customers, and focus on understanding their specific needs. We then deliver what we said we would deliver."



(L-R) Paul-Arthur Huot; Marc Antoine Cantin, President, Stove Builders International; Clément Gignac, National Bank (sponsor); Perrin Beatty.

He adds, "The key is to understand that you don't try to sell what you make, you must make what your export customers need from you. Having said that, don't fall into the trap of trying to be everything to everybody – that is a recipe for disaster."

Another reason behind SBI's fortunes is management's decentralized approach. According to President Cantin, "We do not like to be perceived as typical 'bosses' who dictate to employees what they must do. We have given a high level of responsibility to key employees in all of our processes. It is incredible what intelligent and motivated people can achieve if they are given the opportunity to be creative."

In the future, SBI plans to move forward with additional strategic acquisitions. According to Cantin, "We also have a very large pipeline of products under development."

Marc-Antoine Cantin

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