



or have your product considered for a Wal-Mart brand. You can even have your own brand locally, but have your product under Wal-Mart's brand in an export market."

I was especially interested to meet Hofmann because of all the negative press that Wal-Mart has gotten for many of its policies. I remember sexist hiring practices being one of the accusations leveled at the retail/whole-sale conglomerate; yet Hofmann herself, with her powerful position, seems to belie this allegation. When asked directly, she laughs and shakes her head, "Not in the last 10 years, at least." Instead, she tells a story of Wal-Mart seeking her out for the job from her former position as legislative counsel for a U.S. senator; and when she hesitated because of her toddler and twin babies, Wal-Mart insisted they would offer her a flexible schedule and allow her to work from home when necessary.

Hofmann also explains that the retail giant is moving toward environmentally friendly programs, in terms of how it powers some of its stores and also in stocking a whole new line of organic foods and fibres. She urges, "If you're doing organic, you should probably give us a call."

### A GLOBAL NETWORK FOR WOMEN

For business women in some sectors it may still be difficult to break into the old boys network. But now women professionals in international trade have a set of connections ranging all over the States and everywhere in between... from Nairobi to Geneva, from Cairo to San Juan.

Angela Hofmann is also the president of the Washington chapter of OWIT, the Organization of Women in International Trade, and she found out about the Beyond Borders conference through this connection. I mention this particularly because it turns out that OWIT has a strong Alberta presence. The president of the worldwide association with 22 U.S. chapters and 18 international chapters is Calgary's own Leanne Hackman-Carty.

And right here in Edmonton we have the president of the Alberta chapter, Cheryl Lockhart. Both Lockhart and Hofmann laud the benefits of OWIT, including regular meetings and programs, interactions with other professional associations, and access to other members around the world.

Beyond the benefits for international travel, Hofmann explains OWIT helps women with "mentoring and job banks. Often senior members will look at junior members for job placing." And Lockhart stresses too that the benefits are wide ranging in the community: "Our high quality programs also attract non-members and men." In fact, the official OWIT policy invites all "women and men who are active members of the international trade community" to benefit from its "support, inspiration, information and networking opportunities."

### INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIES

Lockhart herself was another presenter at the Beyond Borders conference, leading a session on *Finding Partners in Export Markets*, tapping her experience consulting for International Strategies Ltd. The company "assists its clients to research and select foreign markets and customers, make maximum use of government programs and resources, qualify leads, undertake marketing missions and secure sales contracts." Her former experience working in Ottawa for Agriculture Canada and in other international business led her to want to do her own consulting for companies, most of whom she helps with entry into the

United States. However, she is now also working with clothing manufacturers in Bali on a program funded by CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency. Lockhart tailors her services to the clients' need. In Bali, for instance, she started out thinking she would need to "help the manufacturers find buyers, but it turned out they had plenty of buyers... they really needed help knowing how to function in the global market." She helped them negotiate cultural differences based on the need for more immediate response in communications and to provide plenty of lead time so as to get order details correct the first time before international shipping.

On business trips to the States and elsewhere, Lockhart regularly hooks up with members of the various OWIT chapters, allowing her instant connections to the business community in those cities, which is why she feels it is such an important organization for people in a profession like hers. Soon she's hoping to get women organized to also found a chapter in Indonesia—the 19th outside the U.S.

### VEGGY-POWERED CARS AND A DELEGATION FROM MWANZA

The Leduc-Nisku EDA (Economic Development Authority) is always active on the international business scene. It's not for nothing it is known as Alberta's International Region. It recently hosted a successful biogas conference with representatives from Germany, Austria, the U.S., and Canada sharing knowledge about this up-and-coming technology. It turns out Alberta is a leader in biogas production, and there is interest in bringing another plant to the International Region. For Marketing and Communications Director Kris Hodgson, one of the more concrete examples highlighting the benefits of this energy source was "when Scott McKay, founding director of the Sustainable Energy Group in Stony Plain, held up a bag of compost and said, 'Do you realize this one kilogram bag could power a car for two kilometres?'" Wow, who knew?

And from June 9th to 16th the International Region hosted a delegation from Mwanza, Tanzania, as a follow-up to a trip by Leduc Nisku EDA members to that country last November. The Tanzanians came here to "brainstorm with Albertans on ideas for government," according to Hodgson. "They are particularly interested in waste management and the Nisku business park and our R & D—how they can develop business similarly in their own region." On June 12th, they were inducted as members of Alberta's International Region... and they met with Leduc County Council to discuss more effective business plans to take back to Africa.

### AND NOW, I BID YOU GOODBYE...

This will be my last month as the international business columnist for *Edmontonians* since my own work in this very arena has picked up too much to leave me time for researching the column. I have truly enjoyed connecting to the fascinating people from the Edmonton area who are involved in marketing their goods and services worldwide. It's been a real kick reporting this news, so now I want to try my hand at making some news. Until I started to dig and delve into local stories, I had no idea how vibrant, diverse and far-reaching Edmonton business is. We must make this known to the larger community.

Thank you for the privilege of helping to sing the song of Edmonton: A great place to live... a great place to work... and a great place to do business. And a special thanks to my wonderful editor Barb Deters and to Sharon MacLean, the brilliant woman who brings us all *Edmontonians*. ✓



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**A**ngela Hofmann, director of international trade for Wal-Mart, recently gave a presentation called *Doing Business with Americans* at Business Link and Export Link's Beyond Borders conference in Edmonton. The point of her talk was "helping small businesses and agricultural suppliers to tap into doing business with Wal-Mart." Very enlightening: I had no idea that Wal-Mart was so interested in small businesses and suppliers, nor that it wanted to attract them to its different international stores, nor that it provided so much support for them to get started in international trade.



Angela Hofmann  
Wal-Mart

As Hofmann explains, "There are 6,534 Wal-Marts worldwide, 2,670 of which are outside of the U.S. serving more than 138 million customers weekly in 16 countries worldwide in Europe, Asia, and the Western Hemisphere." In the Americas, there are stores in Canada, the U.S., Mexico, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Brazil and Argentina.

Hofmann works in "global procurement: a division of Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. that works as a buying agent for our stores around the world, with a worldwide presence in over 20 countries." Her department's agenda is to "take a lot of the mystery out of the supply chain... by identifying suppliers, supporting buy trips, helping with labeling." She explained that many smaller suppliers don't think to do business with Wal-Mart, but they should. For instance, she suggested "Argentina, our smallest market in the Western Hemisphere with only 14 stores, is a good place for a small company to test the market. In the U.S. alone, there are 68,000 suppliers doing business with us."

And Wal-Mart builds flexibility into the relationship. According to Hofmann, a supplier "can export directly