

Belmonte Rose Granite

A solid rock of support

The recent history of Markham, Ontario-based Belmont Rose Granite is very much the story of owner Carole Proud and her relationship with the Ontario International Trade Centre. It has been a productive partnership leading to increased sales. Says Ms. Proud, "They were very enthusiastic about what I was doing, particularly because I was a female in a traditionally male-dominated business."

Belmont Rose Granite provides rose-coloured granite dimensional stone extracted from a 400-acre quarry near Peterborough, Ontario. Ms. Proud says she never imagined that she would some day run a quarry. In the early 1990s she operated her own company in the equipment leasing business. This, in turn, led her to Belmont Rose Granite. She liked the product so much that she bought the company. As for concerns about a woman in a so-called man's business, she says, "Whether you wear a skirt or pants, it makes no difference when it comes to running a successful company."

With her strong marketing skills, Ms. Proud knew that she could expand sales, particularly in the United States, where the company had established a toehold on the East Coast. In 1997 she walked into the Ontario ITC and introduced herself to Candice Rice, the Trade Commissioner responsible for the United States. "I wanted to know who the Trade Commissioners were and what they could do for me," she says.

Ms. Rice told her about a host of services available to exporters: Web sites, the Export Association, other women in business, and trade centres in the United States. She encouraged Ms. Proud to attend the 1999 Businesswomen's Trade Summit in Toronto, sponsored by Team Canada Inc. "There were a great many women there who were as enthusiastic as I am, all wanting to survive in business, to export," says Ms. Proud.

And thanks to funding through the Federal Government's Program for Export Market Development, Ms. Proud was able to participate in a recent trade mission to Washington.

In addition, Canadian trade offices in the United States provided Ms. Proud with facilities for meetings and conference calls with potential customers and distributors. As a result of these activities in Detroit and Buffalo, she broke into the crushed stone market big time. Recently, the company has made progress in the Midwest.

Industrial minerals are market driven. Carole is successfully penetrating six significant yet different international market sectors. This is being achieved through long hard hours of work while remaining focused to each market sector's requirements.

Carole's marketing success justified the company's recent acquisition of its first "state-of-the-art" modern dimensional stone hydraulic drill, having the capacity to increase production by over 300% while reducing unit costs. This increase in production capacity will enable Carole to further expand into the international market sectors that in turn will justify additional modern, highly efficient, quarry production equipment.

Carole's determination and successful marketing agenda complemented with high quality products delivered on time, is resulting in two important developments. The company is cementing a relationship with an equity partnership that could lead to a rapid expansion of the primary and secondary products internationally.

The company is also entering into a relationship with a highly recognized international organization that operates numerous quarries, processing plants and is directly involved in commercial construction and who is furthermore currently reviewing the benefits of forming a partnership that would rapidly expand Belmont Rose's global market share in the primary, secondary and finished product market.

Stay tuned for further progress and advancement of Carole and her Belmont Rose granite!