



**Aironic has established extensive and mature markets for its air purifying products, based on sound research and development, committed and strategic marketing and a determination to provide quality. It has benefited from the expertise of the New South Wales (NSW) Department of State and Regional Development to build new business relationships in export markets.**

### A passion for clearing the air has delivered customers worldwide

Aironic has been in business for 24 years (established 1980) and has designed, tested and built a highly innovative and competitive range of air purifying products that counteract the effects of airborne pollution in the indoor environment. The company made a decision early in its growth to market its products overseas and is now selling into over 30 countries. As part of this strategy, it has used the services and expertise of the NSW Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD) to develop a sales presence in the key export markets of India and China.

Aironic is growing at the rate of 15 per cent per annum with nearly 70 per cent of its turnover now generated by export sales, and it looks forward to further support from DSRD to consolidate this performance.

### Offering a solution to a widespread problem

Gerald Marceau, a mechanical engineer and the founder of Aironic, is a long-term advocate of the importance of improving interior air quality. He notes that, according to the latest CSIRO research, poor interior air quality is costing Australia nearly \$12 billion a year in illness and lost productivity.

The Aironic technology is based on a three-stage system. Filters first remove pollens, large particles and dust from the air plus absorb odours and smoke. A second filter removes all sub-micron size particles. The air is then cleansed with negative ions, which restore the ion balance, providing a natural barrier to pollutants.

The company has designed products tailored to a wide range of environments, including those in homes, factories, offices, hospitals and motor vehicles. Many high profile organizations, including the Hospital Contributions Fund of Australia, support the product and it is listed with the Therapeutic Goods Association.

### Embracing an export strategy

In 1985 Gerald Marceau made the early strategic decision to develop export markets. "This involved a mixture of single-minded determination, because we were small and no one had heard of us, and a great deal of travel." He set about finding effective distributors, appointing the first one in Singapore, where its sales are thriving. The company now also exports to Thailand, Malaysia, Italy, France, Belgium, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

The company realised, however, that it could benefit by drawing on DSRD's widespread expertise in export development to support its entry into some of the more challenging markets.

The relationship began in 2000 when the company was one of the first to be invited by DSRD to participate in the Australian Technology Showcase (ATS). "The ATS relationship has been highly beneficial in enhancing our marketing tools for overseas expansion (including help with our website) and in introducing me to a number of key decision-makers in business and government circles," says Mr Marceau.

## Building market relationships

The company is an active participant on DSRD trade missions, within the New Export Opportunities Program. It travelled with the Department to India in 2002, visiting Mumbai, Pune and Bangalore. "While we had been to India before, the mission was highly beneficial because it provided both 'official' prestige and the pre-arrangement for us of a number of significant business appointments," says Gerald Marceau.

He said that India is a difficult market for Aironic because of the need to educate potential customers about the enduring benefits of the products. "It is a learning experience for both parties, but in the long term we hope to establish a manufacturing facility and DSRD is helping us to lay the groundwork for this goal."

Last year, on a trade mission to China, Aironic was able to re-establish some earlier contacts and to meet some significant officials. "In this market, it is critical to meet the official decision-makers and DSRD arranged a number of these contacts. In fact, one of our products is now used in the office of Shanghai's mayor, one of those contacts," he said.

Gerald Marceau emphasises that the China market requires considerable patience. "The first building blocks have been laid and, incidentally, an Aironic air cleaner is now displayed in a store for Australian-made goods in Shanghai and this arose because the proprietor of that store was on our trade mission. In addition, one of our air cleaners is in the office of the Mayor of Shanghai, as a result of introductions made on the same trade mission." While the company is pursuing a dual strategy of distributor-driven and direct sales, it also aims eventually to manufacture in this market.

## Planning for the future

He believes the company is on a sound platform, based on a philosophy of continual improvement, which will allow a change in its marketing balance to more direct sales to its current and future customer base. The DSRD trade missions program has provided targeted advice and assistance to boost this strategy particularly in export markets with huge potential, such as India and China.

## Business Tips

- Be passionate about your industry
- approach your business with enthusiasm
- set clearly determined goals
- ensure you have (or that you can utilise) the best technical ability
- establish a regime of continuous product or service improvement
- utilise the export market knowledge and expertise of DSRD.

## For further information contact

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