



LAVAL TECHNOPOLE International Business Centre

INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER



FALL 2010

Mari's Foods has a taste for Japanese-style cuisine... and international markets

Mari's Foods, a Laval-based manufacturer and distributor of Japanese-style vinaigrettes led by a global-minded and experienced management team, has been making significant forays into the international business arena by marketing its products across Canada and now throughout the United States, as well.

Wafu® Original Japanese Vinaigrette was created by Mari Toyoda in 1999. Mari was born in Japan and comes from a family of restaurateurs. After emigrating to Canada in the 1980s, she variously ran her own Japanese restaurant in Montréal (in fact, she is one of only a few Japanese chefs in Canada licensed by the City of Tokyo), taught Japanese cooking and operated a company that produced sushi for Quebec supermarkets, hotels and banquet halls, at which time she developed the original version of Wafu® to accompany her sushi offerings. In 2006, seeing the potential of Wafu®, Mari sought out a partnership to further develop and market the brand, which resulted in the creation of Mari's Foods, the purpose of which was to propel Wafu® into a brand and product line with international consumer appeal.

A unique, award-winning product

Wafu®, which literally means Japanese-style, can be used in endless ways, primarily as a salad dressing, but also as a dip or marinade. It is made from ingredients authentic to Japanese cooking and contains no artificial colours or flavours, in addition to being low in cholesterol and/or cholesterol-free, trans fat-free and produced in a peanut-free environment. Furthermore, Wafu® is certified kosher (pareve). Wafu® Original won the 2002 Canadian Grand Prix New Product Award, and the three other variants that have been subsequently developed by the company—Wafu® Original Light, Wafu® Ginger Carrot and Wafu® Wasabi Edamame—have all been nominated as finalists for the same award. In the words of Arabella Decker, Vice President of Marketing and an expert in global brand marketing of consumer goods: "Wafu® has got a buzz going. Once people taste it, they fall in love."

A message from the Director



Your International Business Centre has had a summer rich with ideas and development of activities to promote the internationalization of businesses in Laval. We have prepared for you an event-filled return from the summer that will certainly allow you to multiply your business opportunities.

Thus, on September 1st and 2nd, the first edition of the North American BIO Forum was held. Joining us were 17 American pharmaceutical companies as part of this unique welcome for buyers. It allowed us to promote exporters, as well as the Biotech City. Over 100 people took part in the event.

On September 13th and 14th, a trade mission to Eau-Claire, Wisconsin, allowed many entrepreneurs from here to meet the buyers of Menards, the third-largest renovation chain in the United States. On September 21st, our first World Café took place, as well as our annual cocktail event.

During the fall, some eight training courses will be offered to Laval companies with a program for both new exporters and leaders in the international markets.

See the calendar of activities on our Web site www.lavaltechnopole.com.

Welcome back!

Véronique Proulx, MBA

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Taking Wafu® beyond Quebec

You may have extensive expertise in global business, product development and brand marketing, plus an award-winning product like no other in its category, but that may not be enough to find it a place on the international market. The **LAVAL TECHNOPOLE International Business Centre** helped Mari's Foods put together an international business plan that would enable it to receive financial support from various government agencies (including Investissement Québec, the Quebec Ministère de l'Agriculture, Pêcheries et Alimentation, Canada Economic Development and the Business Development Bank of Canada) to help it in its efforts, through participating in food trade shows and so on, to find distribution for its products throughout Canada and the United States.

These efforts have paid off. The company recently signed a Canada-wide distribution agreement with Tree of Life, one of Canada's top distributors of Asian food products, which will put Wafu® Japanese vinaigrettes on the shelves of such major retailers across the country as Loblaws, Costco, Sobeys, and Métro. Mari's Foods has also secured a U.S.-wide distribution agreement with JFC International, a subsidiary of Kikkoman and one of the premier distributors of Japanese foods to both retail and food service customers throughout the world. What's more, Wafu® Japanese vinaigrettes are now available for sale directly to millions of U.S. customers on Amazon.com.

In addition, Wafu® is increasingly popping up on restaurant and even airline menus. All the company's products are available in 43 ml and 22 ml single-serving packets for takeout use, and are served in such prestigious eateries as the dining rooms of the Montréal and Gatineau casinos and Fairmont Mont Tremblant hotel, as well as in the Palm Court of New York City's iconic Plaza Hotel!

What does the future hold for Mari's Foods? Through its relationship with JFC International and Kikkoman, interest in Wafu® vinaigrettes has been expressed from as far afield as Brazil, Mexico, Europe and Australia. However, as Gil Michel-Garcia, President and CEO of Mari's Foods, says, "We will wait until

Wafu® has really made a name for itself in the U.S. before we seriously start to tackle other international markets." In the meantime, the company is in the process of developing an interactive feature for its Web site that will allow fans of its products everywhere to post and share their favourite Wafu® recipes, among other things.



To learn more about Wafu® Japanese vinaigrettes and Mari's Foods, please contact Arabella Decker, Vice President of Marketing, at 450 901-0112, or visit the Wafu® Web site: www.wafu.ca



The Wafu® family of Japanese-style vinaigrettes

Our team of columnists:





Team selling

Do you recognize yourself in any of these situations?

- Your representatives waste time by trying to sell to the wrong target public.
- The sales pitch varies from rep to rep.
- The selling process is too long, and only half the projected sales are achieved.
- The majority of sales are packages with various services thrown in as a bonus.
- 20% of your team accounts for 80% of your revenue.

These are realities in many companies. Representatives work in their own enclosed world, except when it comes to presenting their monthly forecasts. However, all representatives should be able to evaluate how their individual sales target quotas relate to the company's business development. But how can they, if their objectives are personal and not collective? How do you join forces without a team strategy?

To overcome these obstacles, companies are increasingly adopting a team approach to sales. This has a number of advantages, including:

- healthy emulation (rather than personal competition)
- channelling of strength which leads to common objectives
- cohesion within the team
- uniform sales techniques and strategies
- distribution of market segments to suit each person's skills

Ultimately, this approach allows you to maximize the resources you commit to sales and, of course, to increase your sales!

To learn more about the team sales approach, please contact us.

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Lucrative training for 14 Laval businesses

Since 2009, LAVAL TECHNOPOLE International Business Centre offered four training and coaching activities. These activities will prove to be eminently profitable for the 14 participating companies as, over the next few years, they will generate repercussions valued at \$5.4 million.

Over the last two years, training and coaching has covered diverse topics: Internet, sales, developing new markets and the international supply chain. These activities took the form of group training and individual support to help entrepreneurs incorporate the new knowledge acquired into their day-to-day operations.

In the case of the supply chain topic, this activity was offered to Laval businesses for the first time ever in 2010. According to a survey conducted among the participating businesses, respondents said that the activity helped them reduce their costs and be more competitive in international markets. They predicted

potential savings on the order of \$1.1 million. The five participants also recommended this activity to other companies. We can confirm that the objectives of this training were achieved and that we will certainly repeat the experience for other businesses.

For further information on future training and coaching events, please contact Véronique Proulx by e-mail at veronique.proulx@lavaltechnopole.com or by telephone at 450 978-6507.



Blogger's corner

EDC's 2010 export forecast

Each spring, Export Development Canada (EDC) publishes its Global Export Forecast for the year ahead. EDC's vice president and chief economist, Peter G. Hall, then embarks on a nationwide tour, presenting the analysis at always well-attended luncheon conferences. This forecast has become a benchmark in Canadian international trade and a highly useful tool for those involved in international business development, helping them set priorities and plan their activities for the year.

The following are a few highlights that could be of interest to Laval SME leaders:

- EDC predicts global growth of 3.7% in 2010, a big improvement from the 1.1% recorded last year. Still, EDC refuses to call it a recovery, given the many risks still threatening the world economy: the announced end to massive stimulus measures, instability on the financial and commodity markets, fear of inflation and a potential new wave of protectionism.
- Within NAFTA, Mexico is expected to post the strongest GDP growth, projected at 3.5% in 2010 and 4% in 2011. Globally, the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India China) will dominate, with China and India leading the way. Solid gains are also expected in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.
- After a tough year in 2009, Canadian merchandise exports should rebound to the tune of 13% this year. Quebec exports are projected to increase 9% in 2010, placing it seventh among the Canadian provinces.
- The EDC predicts a 22% jump in Canadian merchandise exports to Brazil, the sharpest growth among the principal trading countries. Last year, exports to Brazil represented a mere 0.4% of all Canadian merchandise exports and had tumbled 41.4% from 2008. What this means is that Canadian companies would do well to establish stronger business ties with this now indispensable market.
- U.S.-bound exports should also improve, picking up 14%. Given the relative importance of this market (75%) for Canadian exporters, this bit of news is encouraging.
- Looking at markets by sector, exports will increase mostly in energy, commodities, and vehicles and auto parts. Aeronautics, the only sector where exports grew last year, and agri-food, will be the only two with negative growth in 2010.

After reading this analysis, I noticed that the activities we have planned for 2010 fit in well with these forecasts. In fact, we just recently returned from a very successful mission to Mexico and are in the process of organizing others for the fall, namely to China and Brazil. We will also be very proactive on the U.S. market, which is still the market of choice for most Laval exports.

You can read the Global Export Forecast on the EDC Web site: www.edc.ca > Resources > Country information (right vertical menu).

Bruno Séguin

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