

Management Solutions Software AG

Management Solutions, based at the village of Hall, near Canberra, is a small software company that has built its export markets with a sensible application of limited funds, rather than a scattergun approach to exports. Most muscle has been applied to market research, then to providing service before and after a sale, and finding credible locally-based partners.

Management Solutions produces FINEST software, which is tailored for the public sector. The company sought countries with either large governments or numerous federal and provincial governments. This led to Europe and the US, rather than Asia. The British market presented an opportunity in the early 1990s: Management Solutions seized it. Almost every British agency was being rationalised and needed a product such as FINEST. The rest of Europe was seen as having slower potential, while the US was too big for a new exporter.

The Australian marketing manager was seconded to Britain and a partnership was formed with a large European software company, Software AG, helping credibility. Management Solutions sent eight research and development staff to St Albans in Britain for 18 months to adapt the software to British needs. With them went 12 consultants for support work, convincing UK clients that the company was in for the long haul. The first sale was to the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1993, followed by large contracts with the Department of the Environment and the Scottish Prison Service.

In late 1994, Software AG began sales and support of FINEST, with Management Solutions taking a consulting and technical role. This soon led to major sales to the Inland Revenue, Devon County Council, Devon and Cornwall police and other Authorities. Management Solutions is transferring technology to Software AG to expand the business without putting unreasonable demands on Australian staff. New marketing is focused on Africa and Asia.

For contact details and further information, have a look at the web site <http://www.mansol.com.au/>

Student exercises

1. What is the advantage of having a locally based partner to provide customer sales and service?
2. What 'niche' market did Management Solutions identify and how did they exploit it?
3. How did Management Solutions prioritise the markets for selection?
4. What strategies can smaller companies, new to exporting, employ to gain credibility in new markets?