



Era Publications

BEYOND THE BACKYARD:
Family Business Case Study

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Era's History

1971: Backyard part-time business – partnership of 3 couples with \$1,200.

1977: One family couple remaining – business a good national sideline.

1980: A full-time effort – low returns – vulnerable – under-funded.

Attended an 'Export Now!' promotion by the federal government.



THE 'EXPORT NOW!' PITCH

How will you survive when the economy falters in your local/domestic scene?

- **Build export clients to spread your customer base, lower risk and increase growth potential.**
- **Perform to an international standard and improve the quality and strength of your position in the domestic scene.**

It made sense then: it makes sense today.



Era's History

Apr. 1980: Took part in a Government Trade Display in Suva, Fiji.

Wrong market! Wrong type of trade event.

Oct. 1980: Attended Frankfurt Book Fair.

Right market place! Plenty of buyers, plenty of markets, but astonishingly huge!

Old player's advice – it will take 3 years before any serious business will happen...



Era's History

1980-82: Attended Frankfurt Book Fair again.

1981: Began attending Bologna Children's Book Fair.

- **Funds ran out – sold family house.**
- **Export Market Development Grant closed the gap just enough to allow survival.**
- **Made some minor sales (UK, NZ, USA)**

1983: First major export deal (UK) – but why?



Era's History

1983:

A UK friend, whom I met at Frankfurt through the UK office of another Australian company, introduced me to another UK friend in Era's market niche...

who arranged interviews with two companies in our area of specialisation. One of those companies took on our products.



Era's History

1983-2007:

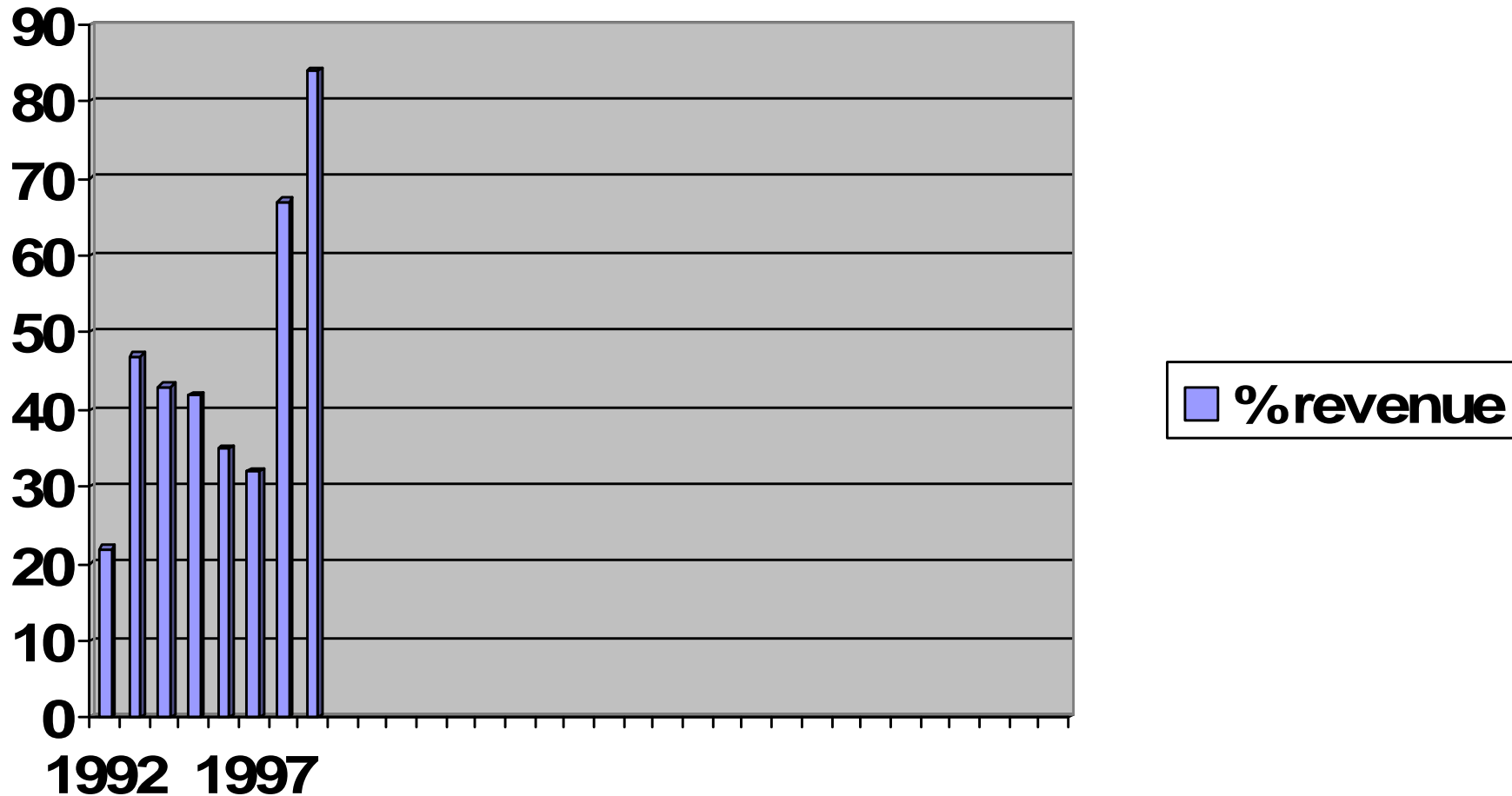
Our products have been published or distributed in over 30 countries.

Books translated into 18 languages other than English.

Export sales have been up to 80% of our business – generally 40-50%.



Export as % of revenue '92-'99





Export lessons learned

1. It's a small world

Networking at major trade events is crucial for building a picture of your world market and its players.

2. It's who you know

Build relationships through regular attendance at trade events – they take you through many doors.



Export lessons learned

3. It's who you trust (& who trusts you)

Partners are a world away. They need to trust each other. (Relationships, introductions, recommendations)

4. Be patient, persistent and committed

The old man's 3-year rule was correct in Era's case. Don't expect major wins in the first round.



Export lessons learned

5. Get some expert help

I was poorly prepared and did not get practical help. This made my journey more arduous than it should have been.

Exporting is not rocket science, but it does take planning. There are government and industry bodies to help you do this. There are networks to give you leads.



Export lessons learned

6. Treat export as business insurance

When the domestic market struggled, export gave me an advantage against the local competitors who only thought local.

7. Be flexible

Be prepared to enter a range of deal types so you can fit into the various world cultural patterns and market needs.



The Challenges

Necessity for global thinking

Do you think you are a local, national or international business? Think big.

Do you think overseas businesses will leave you unchallenged in your local market?

Niche thinking

Can you be world-class in a focused area of activity?



Summary

Export has expanded Era's growth potential

- Export markets give us a scale of operations that enable us to compete with the multinationals.**
- Since exporting, we have achieved award recognition at the highest level in Australia and overseas. It made us perform at our best.**



Summary

Export has also enabled us to:

- build significant frequent flyer points**
- keep our duty-free drinks cabinet stocked**
- develop some wonderful international friendships and**
- experience the world and other cultures from the inside – as the locals see it.**



Summary

So do yourself, your present and future family, and your country a favour.

Get an overseas ticket; get a foothold beyond your own backyard!