



Canadian Trade Successes 11-06
Silver Jeans

SILVER JEANS WORKS ITS MAGIC ABROAD

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Silver Jeans

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Key Quotation:

Michael Silver heartily recommends that other Canadian businesses thinking of exporting products take the plunge. He feels that Canadian companies have a particular advantage when expanding into foreign markets. "Internationally, Canada is very highly thought of as an honest, trustworthy nation... It certainly helps in initial conversations and dialogue with individuals from foreign countries when you introduce yourself as a Canadian."

Story details:

When Michael Silver first tried to show his jeans at the prestigious MAGIC Apparel and Fashion Show in Las Vegas, he couldn't secure a spot on the show floor. Instead, he set up a booth in a small room offsite.

Silver founded his Winnipeg-based company, Silver Jeans, in 1991, but quickly realized the limited potential for growth within the Canadian market. So, with the help of financial assistance from Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, Silver Jeans travelled to the MAGIC Apparel and Fashion Show the following year. His brand received limited exposure at the show that season, but it was enough to give him a taste of what was to come.

The MAGIC event, which today attracts over 90,000 fashion industry members and retailers, would become a springboard for Silver Jeans' success. "Ultimately, after learning how the show works and how I best operate within the show, my exposure grew," Silver says.

Now, 14 years after its first appearance at MAGIC, the Silver Jeans booth is front and centre at the Las Vegas Convention Center in the Contemporary section of the show floor. The company is showcasing its spring line and introducing a new custom line of artistically embellished jeans, called 1921 Jeans.

Silver got the idea for the new custom line on one of his frequent business trips overseas. He was attending a fashion press party in Tokyo when he noticed a young man wearing a pair of Silver Jeans—but with a difference. Takuto Mochizuki, a 24-year-old Japanese artist, had made a name for himself in Tokyo by patching, stitching and painting designs on popular brands of jeans. It just so happened that he had chosen Silver Jeans as the canvas for his latest work of art.

Silver contacted his director of design, Allan Kemp, and the two quickly signed Mochizuki to work under their new label, 1921 Jeans. Mochizuki's unique designs were a perfect match for Silver Jeans, a company that had made its mark designing styles to suit a variety of customers worldwide. "[Fashion] changes from region to region, and those are the complexities that one must study before [entering] the marketplace," Silver says.

Reaching out to foreign markets has taken Silver Jeans to a new level of success. Since its first year selling jeans internationally, Silver Jeans' business outside of Canada has risen from 5 percent to 75 percent. That increase has taken the company from generating \$1.5 million a year to \$75 million a year.

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