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### **Blue Link connects on first international distribution deal**

by Mark Riehl

Blue Link has signed its first international distribution agreement in hopes of selling its accounting solutions to United Kingdom and Ireland SME clients, but the company will take its international growth one step at a time, while continuing to step-up its Canadian resellers.

The Concord, Ont.-based business and accounting software maker linked a long-term distribution agreement with Apprent Ltd. of Derbyshire, England. The agreement authorizes Apprent to offer UK SME clients the option to rent Blue Link Solutions' international version of their business and accounting software.

Grant Waldman, Blue Link's channel manager, said Apprent approached Blue Link after reviewing its software on the Internet.

"This is our only plunge into the international arena right now, other than some activity in the U.S.," Waldman said, adding that Blue Link isn't looking to quickly expand beyond the U.K. market at this time.

"It's going to be a wait and see. Let's see how Apprent performs and where they take us," Waldman said.

"It's a slow and steady wins the race type of scenario."

Waldman was hired well over a year ago to beef-up Blue Link's domestic channel, along a strategy of being selective in their search for quality partners while also looking to broaden its channel to system integrators, consulting firms, and referral partners.

At the time, Waldman was optimistic that Blue Link would double its dozen productive partners during 2001, and have at least 50 resellers on board in 2002.

"Last year was not up to expectations, I would say it was a flat year," Waldman said. "This year we are seeing a lot more progress and lot more interest," adding that the aftermath of Y2K, the fall of the dot.coms and September 11 were all factors attributing to the flat year.

"It's market hesitancy, resellers are very careful and cautious on bringing on new software lines these days just based on the recent history of the software industry."

Blue Link has slowly built up to about 20 current reseller partners in most major cities across Canada.

Blue Link continues to look for resellers with a strong accounting software installation background and are preferred to have technical skill sets and knowledge of Microsoft Office.

Waldman would also like to build a stronger reseller presence in the western provinces.

Back in March Blue Link introduced a product that would benefit resellers by giving them the opportunity to deliver solutions to larger businesses.

Blue Link introduced a Microsoft SQL Server version of its flagship product, Blue Link Solutions a multi-user, multi-currency, real time, business and accounting solution built with Microsoft technology.

This version allows for a high user base and transaction volume that allows Blue Link, instead of delivering to an average of 10 to 15 users, to be able to target the 40 to 50 user range and its much higher scale transaction volumes.

"That has stepped us up in the marketplace. We have typically been in the entry market, but it certainly has pushed us to the middle market where players like Navision and Great Plains play," Waldman said, adding that they have closed several deals with larger companies in the \$30 to \$50 million range in revenues.

"It has certainly taken us into a different range in the market."