

CASE STUDY 1 SYLVIA REMPEL, SUN ICE LIMITED

Three different teams of climbers have fought their way up the dangerous slopes of Mount Everest protected by clothing made by Sylvia Rempel's company, Sun Ice Limited. Sun Ice produces recreational outerwear, distinguished by a V-striped collar. The clothing has won an enviable reputation among customers and is distributed throughout North America. Sun Ice provides clothing for the staff at the Vail, Colorado, ski resort in the United States and produced 30 000 sets of pants and jackets for the participants in the 1988 Winter Olympics.



Rempel designed and made her first clothes for her family. The ski-wear her son Don wore to the slopes drew requests from his friends for similar gear, so Rempel made a few more sets. A Calgary retailer saw her work and offered to sell it in his store. Rempel saw an opportunity to become part of the international fashion industry.

With her own capital, borrowed money, and the support of her family, Rempel launched Sun Ice Limited in Calgary in 1978. Her first factory was in a pool hall, and sales that first year amounted to \$50 000. A year later, sales hit more than \$300 000. By 1989, sales had passed \$25 million, and more than 250 employees were working for her. The company now has a modern production facility that is being adapted to computer-assisted manufacturing techniques. Sun Ice's investment in computers alone exceeds \$1 million. To provide the capital to allow Sun Ice to expand further, especially into the American market, the company "went public" in 1986 by offering shares to investors through the stock market.

Like many other successful ventures, Rempel's started modestly. As she developed her business, Rempel kept adjusting her goals. When her clothing styles became available in Calgary, she began to look for markets in the rest of Canada and then in the United States. Canadian Business magazine quoted her husband as asking Rempel, "You think a cow-town girl like you can compete with international designers?" "Just watch me," she replied.



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- 1) What qualities did Sylvia Rempel have that made her appropriate to start and be successful at her venture?

- 2) What obstacles or risk to success did she face?