

thriving  
in  
tough  
times

## Doing homework paid off for entrepreneur

By **MARTHA WILSON**

Rainer Bressmer, president of the South Shore-based company **TecBox International Ltd.**, came to Nova Scotia to be an entrepreneur.

After climbing the corporate ladder in Germany, where he had had a management position with Hewlett Packard, Bressmer decided it was time to take things in a new direction. He looked into some franchise opportunities in Germany, but nothing felt like the right fit.

Bressmer and his wife have always been adventurous, as he says. "We like to do new things," but emigrating hadn't been an idea they had given much thought to. Then he spotted a notice in a German newspaper about a business for sale in Vancouver.

That one wasn't the right option, but a few weeks later, Bressmer attended an event with Canadian representatives from a number of provinces discussing the range of opportunities available for people interested in moving here.

He had been only vaguely aware of Nova Scotia before that; now, suddenly, it became a place where he and his family might choose to settle. They started looking seriously at what Nova Scotia had to offer.

Their relocation to Nova Scotia in 2004 went through several phases. One thing Bressmer realized was that there's no simple way for an entrepreneur here to identify suitable companies that are for sale.

"I felt there was really room for improvement in finding ways to identify businesses for sale," he says. Back in Germany, he explains, there's a recognized mechanism through which potential buyers can learn about firms that are available.

Because we don't have such a forum, he cobbled together a strategy that any would-be

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business owner would do well to emulate.

He talked with people at regional development agencies and folks at chartered accounting firms. He spoke with business managers at various banks. He devoted seven months to searching for a suitable company.

He and his wife liked the South Shore area. They eventually identified TecBox in rural Rhodes Corner, between Bridgewater and Lunenburg.

TecBox designs and builds packaging, mostly for aerospace and high-tech firms.

Now that Bressmer had, through persistence and thoroughness, found a potential company to buy in the area of the province he liked, he used those same skills to figure out if this particular organization would be a good fit.

He delved into the questions of TecBox's capabilities and chances for growth; he also scrutinized the competition. And the more he looked, the more he liked what he was seeing.

"I only found one other competitor who was doing something similar — and that was in HRM," he says. "There was nothing south of Halifax."

Another point he looked into carefully was the fact that TecBox had one main client, Lunenburg's **Composites Atlantic**. Would that be too risky?

Bressmer talked at length with Composites Atlantic's management about their company's needs. In the end, he was convinced the opportunity was worth the risks.

Since purchasing TecBox, Bressmer has expanded its capacities by adding new equipment and new capabilities. The company used to make only wooden shipping crates; now the firm makes extremely sturdy cardboard ones.

He's settled into the community and taken on a number of roles in business and social organizations. One that is important to him: reaching out to newcomers to Canada, helping them get established here so they can thrive.