

PAT TREMAINE: THE EVOLUTION OF 'MA BELL'

By Karen Christensen

AS Vice President of Bell Sympatico, **Pat Tremaine** (EMBA '97) is a key custodian of one of Canada's biggest and best-known brands. But we're not talking about the bureaucratic, predictable Ma Bell of yore. Today's Bell is agile and very much a player in the New Economy.

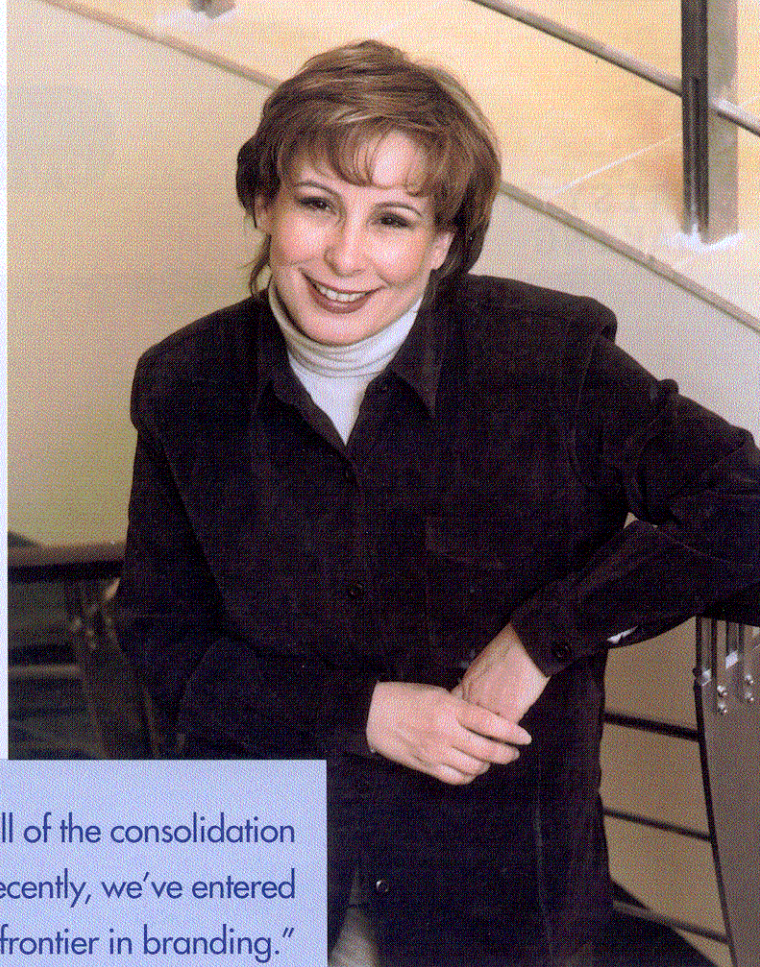
Once known simply as "the telephone company," today's Bell covers much wider territory, most of it of the high-tech variety. Its current incarnations include **Bell Mobility** (wireless telephones), **Bell Actimedia** (e-commerce solutions), **Bell Expressvu** (satellite TV), **Bell Nexxia** (broadband solutions), and **Bell Zinc** (a business-to-business portal).

In a business climate dominated by consolidation, Bell is at the center of the action. One of its most ambitious initiatives is Bell Globemedia, which owns Canada's National Newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, and CTV, Canada's leading private broadcaster, and operates a total of 18 Internet portals. "With this convergence, we'll have even more to offer our customers in terms of content," says Pat.

The developments keep coming at breakneck speed. "We recently announced plans to develop a new technology that will integrate high-speed Internet access (Digital Subscriber Line, or DSL) with satellite television and enhanced digital storage," says Pat. "The services will be delivered via an Internet gateway connected through Bell's DSL service and an enhanced television set top box. By integrating these capabilities, Bell ExpressVu customers will be able to access the Internet from their television; send and receive e-mail; chat online; use instant messaging; obtain interactive information on the broadcast programs that they are watching; as well as play games, download content and create customized programming."

Bell Sympatico is Canada's leading internet service provider (ISP) and largest portal, providing customers with both connectivity and content. Pat manages the connectivity piece of the Internet for Bell, including "the marketing, the operations, the end-to-end business unit." All tolled, she oversees about 2,500 employees. "When you combine our dial-up product with our high-speed product, we're servicing almost 800,000 subscribers. We're selling two things: connectivity and service."

Is there a golden thread that weaves all the Bell brands together? "The history and reliability of Bell are something all our brands get to leverage. Having the established and trustworthy Bell name alongside Sympatico is especially important when you're dealing with new technologies, which can often be uncertain." Another thing all the brands can draw on is the large scope of services Bell offers. "We're in the connectivity, commerce and content business, and what the Bell brand



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stands for is the trusted ability to provide these product and service offerings for our customers — whether they be residential or business."

Making the transition from "the telephone company" to a leading-edge telecommunications giant hasn't been easy. "Our brand's image is evolving to be more relevant, with resonance for today's technologically-savvy customer. We are developing so many products and services today that are not at all 'Ma Bell'."

"With all of the consolidation happening recently, we've entered a new frontier in branding," says Pat. "Our acquisition of *The Globe and Mail* and CTV is all about trying to pull things together in a way that make sense for consumers." But because each of these is a powerful brand unto itself, these activities can lead to huge branding dilemmas. "What comes out the other end will be very interesting. It's a dynamic and exciting place to be right now."

Pat takes great pride in the accomplishments of her Sympatico team. "We've been able to do phenomenal things in the past year. We've gone from 51,000 high-speed customers to 264,000. When you realize that this team didn't exist a year ago — that's pretty amazing."

In her spare time, Pat golfs ("but not well"), is an amateur photographer, and reads a lot — usually something escapist in nature. A few years back, she entered an amateur photography contest judged by the photographers at *Look* magazine, and to her great surprise, placed third. She also loves taking road trips with her husband. "We've driven to South Carolina, Texas, Washington D.C., the Mid-West. We usually go for a week or two, without planning where we're going in advance — we just take off and see where the road takes us." **RM**