



Canada Investment and Savings Lays Groundwork for Online Bond Sales

Abstract

A Web site offering marketing information and the forms needed to purchase Canada Savings Bonds was opened by Canada Investment and Savings (CI&S) in time for the annual CSB sales campaign in the fall of 1996.

CI&S was created in August of 1995 as part of government efforts to more effectively manage its debt by maintaining and expanding the investor base among the widest possible range of individual Canadians.

The Department of Finance, Bank of Canada and Ottawa-based ARRAY Development assisted in structuring the Web-based services and associated business processes. Consumer reaction has been very positive.

The CI&S Canada Savings Bond Site

In the summer of 1996, Canada Investment and Savings began planning and development of a Web-based system for distributing marketing information related to the annual Canada Savings Bond sales campaigns.

The project was supported by the Bank of Canada with Web and business-process-design expertise provided by ARRAY Development of Ottawa. Graphics were developed by the Department of Finance.

One goal of CI&S was to have an online presence to complement traditional print and media advertising campaigns. The site (<http://www.cis-pec.gc.ca/>) was designed to facilitate rapid updating of both French and English data files. The design builds in co-ordination with the Department of Finance and other government information providers to avoid duplication of effort and reduce the chance of conflicting or obsolete information inadvertently appearing online.

The other major goal was to develop and demonstrate transactional tools that will allow Canadians to use the Internet to purchase CSBs directly from Canada Investment and Savings. A couple of dozen Canadians used these forms to purchase their 1996 bonds. Purchasers were asked to print out the completed forms and mail or deliver them to CI&S. As electronic payment processes are developed and become more widespread, CI&S hopes to process these requests electronically.

The site offers a convenient online bond-value calculator to allow consumers to easily determine the value of bonds -- of any series in circulation -- on any selected date. Another online tool was developed to allow bond owners to maintain electronic records of their bond holdings.

The site also provides a graphic treat to visitors. An image gallery allows Web surfers to look at the posters that were used to market Victory Bonds and Canada Savings Bonds over the past 50 years.

Consumer Reaction

The site attracted 130,000 hits during the campaign and continues to receive about 1,500 per month. Consumer comments (see below) have been very positive. Nearly two dozen Canadians submitted purchase applications on forms printed from the Web site.

These reactions suggest that it would be worthwhile to more actively promote awareness of the Web site in

announcements and traditional advertising materials. The Web site is a very effective complement to print and broadcast media. It allows both consumers and financial advisers to instantly receive updated information when changes are announced to interest rates or other bond conditions during the sales period. It also reassures financial advisors and sales personnel that their information is correct and up-to-date.

Rob Redmond, a Certified Management Consultant with Fraser and Associates in Ottawa, talked about the site on a local CBC Radio program.

He said "...I was very impressed with the information that was there. It was well laid out, it was user friendly and I found it very, very complete. . . It was very, very easy to read."

The information is also available anywhere, any time, which is particularly useful for individuals deciding how to invest their retirement savings plan contributions, for example.

The Web site also makes information about Canada Savings Bonds easily accessible to interested persons outside the country. These may be Canadians working overseas, academic researchers or financial industry analysts. The site received hits from Australia, Bermuda, Switzerland, France, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, Slovenia, UK and the US.

Selected Comments Received by the WebMaster

- Have you thought of basic information in other languages next year? Chinese, Italian etc.
- Je trouve très bien le *Calculateur* pour évaluer la valeur d'un portefeuille d'obligations.
- I appreciate being able to receive information on your current series as well as past series on-line.
- Félicitations; l'on navigue facilement traverse l'information qui nous intéresse. Particulièrement bien fait, d'un logique simple. Il est agréable de voir qu'une de nos institutions si chères aux Canadiens s'est mise au diapason de la nouvelle technologie.
- I liked the posters that show the changes over the years of the CSB starting with the Victory Bonds. I would like to see what the actual bonds looked like for the same years as the posters.

Evolution of the Site

Now that the basic structure and business processes are in place, the site can be easily adapted to a variety of marketing activities related to Canada Savings Bonds. In early 1997, for example, information useful to persons making decisions about Registered Retirement Savings Plan investments was placed on the site.

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