

The Whittle Story

A Live Book

Becoming a Born Global company

By Ruth Whittle, January 2019

We became aware that Whittle Programming was a “Born Global” company when, around 1990, the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), asked us whether they could use our company as a case study for their students. Even though we had not realised until then that there was such a thing, we certainly fulfilled all the requirements

From the outset, we recognised that mining is a world-wide industry, and this shaped the form of our marketing.

To announce the software, we decided to write to all the major mining companies in the world. Using an international mining directory borrowed from Newmont, I prepared list of mines world-wide whose open pit operations made them suitable users of Jeff’s new program. The list was long, so we eventually decided not to include South Africa, against whom trade sanctions were at that time in force.

The initial flyer was professionally type-set and printed on a heavy-weight copy paper. We chose the colour “gold” (bright yellow) to hint at the wealth and prosperity to come and we thought it was very splendid. (We do not have a copy and it is unlikely that any still exist.) It was directed “To the Chief Mining Engineer” of each company and duly mailed out from the local Post Office in September 1985.

Some weeks later, after we had received just a small number of replies, I wrote a letter (on our own letterhead) addressed to “The CEO” of the non-responding companies, saying that we had recently sent this flyer to their Chief Mining Engineer “who we were sure had discussed it with them”. It was a very short letter because CEO’s do not read long letters. From the quick responses to this, it was evident that some Engineers had not spoken to their CEOs. Mission accomplished!

Initially, we were working from our home which had a strange suburban address and did not even include the word “Melbourne”.

Our logo, designed for a minuscule fee by one of the draughtsmen at Newmont, was designed to put us, and Australia, firmly on the map.

In all our documents and advertising literature, we chose to adopt the American spelling of “optimization”. Besides, I liked the crisp dazzle of the ‘z’. Sensibly, Whittle Consulting has now reverted to the British/Australian spelling of “optimisation”.

Newmont had been using the early software for no charge in exchange for information. In June 1986, Laval University, Canada, was the first of several universities in North America to take a copy at concessional rates for teaching purposes.

In July 1986, our first actual sale (for money) was to APIRSA, a company in Spain. We were on our way!

To read Ruth’s bio please scroll to the next page..



Ruth Whittle BA

Ruth has an honours degree in French from the University of London.

Her first job was as Executive Officer in the Ministry of Supply in London, then in administration at AERE, Harwell (Atomic Energy Research Establishment).

After marrying Jeff in 1954, she devoted herself full-time to raising their six children, five sons and a daughter.

The family moved from England to Melbourne, Australia, in 1961.

When Jeff and Ruth established Whittle Programming in 1984, she successfully undertook the marketing of the software.

Since her retirement in 2000, Ruth has maintained a keen interest in the continuing development of the Whittle software.

She is currently working on compiling a history of the Whittle software by means of a Live Book.

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