

The past decade has seen activity in the telecommunications industry thrown into high gear, with changes coming faster than most people can assimilate them.

NorTel, at 250 Sidney St., has done for more than merely kept up with the changes. It is leading them.

The plant's main product is its Magellan product line for voice, data and video transmission. Another is the Small Systems Option 11 business telephone exchange.

"The Option 11 product was fully designed and developed here," says Kieran Gunning, assistant vice-president, manufacturing and operations, multimedia products.

Magellan and Option 11 are just two of the product lines produced in Belleville and exported to 160 countries, says Kelly Norgate, manager of media relations.

Overall, 90 per cent of its products are exported and 60 per cent go outside North America.

"I think it's a real Canadian success story. Not only NorTel but NorTel (here) in the community," said Gunning.

"We had a highly successful year in '96 with revenues at \$12.8 billion," says Norgate. Of that, Belleville's plant produced just under \$1 billion.

Last year the company bought MICOM in Simi Valley, Cal. "We are presently transferring the manufacturing of those products into Belleville,"

said Gunning.

As well, there is a team of engineers at NorTel working with "voice-over ATM," which is a fast means of sending information over a network.

Early last fall the company opened a state-of-the-art EMC testing building con-

structed largely of Fiberglas, with no metal in it. The facility is used to test the electro-magnetic compliance of new products.

Previously, new equipment had to be sent to sites around the world and resulted in delays getting the product to market.

Gunning is most proud of the company's employees, who have taken the company to where it stands today.

NorTel has a voluntary program called Return to Learning, in which the company pays for any course geared at improving the employability of workers, whether for NorTel or another field of work, says Gunning. It's a joint program between NorTel and CAW locals 1530 and 1839.

Return to Learning is heading in to its third year

'We like to think we have a very open culture where people bring their brains to work and make use of them'

and has approximately 50 per cent employee participation. General Motors implemented a similar program and had 15 per cent participation the first year, says Gunning. NorTel had 30 per cent its first year, exceeding its goal by 10 per cent.

In February NorTel opened a Computer Learning Centre as part of its Return to Learning pro-

gram. The lab was opened because of the strong demand for computer training.

"The highest participation (in Return to Learning) is in computers, but we have everything from employees doing truck driving (training) to getting their airplane licences," said Gunning. "We have a learning culture here. People are in constant learning."

"Real job security comes from the individual's drive," he said. "We've worked out a direct correlation between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction."

Norgate adds, "It's statistically linked. It's something you can prove, it's not just intuitive."

To ensure the quality of NorTel products, workers can make suggestions on how to improve the production process. If an idea is adopted, the employee receives a financial reward.

Such programs promote employee loyalty. On average, Nortel employees have more than 20 years of experience at the plant, "so they have dedicated their life to NorTel and they seem to enjoy it," says Gunning. "We like to think we have a very open culture where people bring their brains to work and make use of them."

Each shift begins with a quality excellence meeting in every work area, so employees can discuss problems and ways of fixing them.

All with constant improvement in the workplace, NorTel and its employees continually work to improve their community. In 1996, NorTel, its employees and CAW Locals 1530 and 1839, donated \$155,935 during their Sharing and Caring Day. The money went to numerous charitable organizations and causes that benefit Belleville and the surrounding area.

Intell Supp.

March 31/97