
Trade Shows

Regional trade shows are another good source for locating prospective agents/distributors. Participating manufacturers with complementary but non-competing lines may be willing to discuss their marketing arrangements.

Other Exporters

Association or industry colleagues in Canada can often provide valuable information about their own experience in the international marketplace and, providing there is no conflict of interest, may be willing to recommend their own agent/distributor.

Assessing the Agent or Distributor

Once a list of potential representatives has been developed, the next step is to assess their suitability. To narrow down the field, it is recommended that the exporter design a questionnaire and forward a copy to each prospective candidate. From the replies, the exporter will be able to draw up a list of questions for the personal interview.

The questionnaire should be prefaced with a short description of the exporter's company, its products and its goals in the foreign marketplace. Do not hesitate to follow up an inquiry with a telephone call. This will signal the seriousness of your intent. Although questions will vary according to specific product requirements, they should include:

- types of products the agent/distributor currently handles;
- names of other firms represented by the agent/distributor;
- date the company was founded;
- growth of the company over the last several years;
- frequency of regular company visits;
- after-sales service capability, if required; and
- names and addresses of credit references.