



4.1 Plan what to say in advance

The goal of your first meeting with a local contact is to obtain enough information about the company to understand the contact's business and raise his/her interest in learning more about partnering with Canadian companies.

Remember that during this meeting, you are representing a business opportunity for the local contact. To have a productive interview, you should be focusing on “starting a conversation” rather than pushing the benefits of doing business with Canada.

4.2 Listening skills during the outcall

The outcall should focus on the local contacts—on your prospect's needs and interests in improving their business. You should focus on asking questions first rather than making statements. As a general rule:

You should be talking 20–30% of the time while the local contact is talking 70–80% of the time.

Ask general questions that are designed to motivate and keep the local contact talking (*see the telephone call template on page 40*).

As a trade commissioner, you need to develop listening skills to build a relationship with the local contact in order to have a productive outcall.

Listening skills: How to be an empathetic listener

- + Take notes
- + Ask questions
- + Avoid disruptions
- + Pay attention
- + Repeat and paraphrase
- + Ask your local contact to repeat
- + Listen for understanding, not convincing
- + Focus on your local contact, not on your next question
- + Use listening responses (e.g., “yes,” and “go on...”)