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Volume 2, No. 2

THE TRADE POST

In this issue, we've inserted a short readership survey. Don't tell us what you think we want to hear, tell us what you think and want to hear!
Be honest, we take the good with the bad!

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The Trade Post is a quarterly newsletter for members of the Trade Commissioner Service. Its purpose is to facilitate discussion of matters of common interest and concern among members. Please send your contributions and comments to TOO via E-Mail, telex, or facsimile at (613) 996-8688.

NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INNOVATION

By Christopher Wood

To promote Canadian business within the framework of NAFTA, a four-year program called Access North America was established in March 1993. Its main objective has been to inform Canadians of business opportunities in the Mexican market and to assist them to take advantage of NAFTA.

However, even before the Agreement came into effect, we were inundated with enquiries. We were simply not equipped to cope with this sudden surge of interest and we ran the risk of being buried in an avalanche of information requests. Access North America gave us the "muscle" to deal with the tidal wave but we lacked the "tools". We needed an information system - a system that would provide accurate, up-to-date and comprehensive information on Mexico, and one which would be accessible to users "on demand".

Armed with a basic framework developed from information requirements of Canadian exporters, we invited proposals through the Open Bidding System. Prospectus Inc., an Ottawa-based firm specializing in researching, writing, designing and producing materials on doing business internationally, submitted the winning bid. The involvement of Prospectus was only the begin-

ning of a public/private sector partnership which now includes OGDs and corporate sponsors. Prospectus contracted to *develop* and *manage* a market information system which has come to be known as the Knowledge Base.

THE KNOWLEDGE BASE: WHAT IS IT?

The *Knowledge Base*, which is at the pilot stage, is an integrated electronic market information data base. It is designed to help raise awareness of opportunities for Canada in the emerging Mexican market, serving as an important tool in helping Canadian companies establish a foothold in the market. It is also designed to serve as the foundation upon which the Department can build its trade development program for Mexico.

The Knowledge Base draws information from a wide variety of sources. In addition to Departmental sources, it will include information from OGDs, the business press, commercial data bases, the Mexican government and international organizations as well as our corporate sponsors.

The Knowledge Base is divided into four general sections: market information, reference materials, business issues, and business planning tools.

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