



WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL MARKETING STRATEGY FOR PENETRATING YOUR MARKET? WHAT DO SUCCESSFUL CANADIAN COMPANIES HAVE IN COMMON?

Tawagoshi (Tokyo): The Japanese market is very difficult to penetrate because of very stringent regulatory practices. Canadian companies should continue to improve the quality of their products, as well as concentrate more on East Asian markets. Canadian companies that succeed in this market usually have a good Japanese distributor and immediate technical customer support.

Palamides (Los Angeles): A reliable strategy is a focussed strategy. A firm must serve a particular target in such an exceptional manner that others cannot compete on price or service. One must plan well, execute well and generate revenue as early as possible.

The Canadian firms that have succeeded in this market are innovators. They offer their alliance partner cost savings, unique expertise and forward-thinking ideas. They also offer quality products, improved technology and reliability. Moreover, several firms have a physical presence in the territory or a permanent representative.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE ANY BEST PRACTICES THAT REALLY WORK?

Tawagoshi (Tokyo): One of the practices that I have found to be successful is to send greeting cards to contacts and companies that I have had dealings with in the past. The Japanese have a tradition of sending greeting cards in summer and the new year. It keeps you up-to-date with people, and can help you to establish new contacts.

Palamides (Los Angeles): One suggestion would be to encourage companies to properly use the TCS services that are available throughout the world. Officers at posts can provide helpful advice as to the activities within the local market. However, a firm must do its homework prior to embarking on such an endeavour. Everyone wants to get the quick sale, but a little due diligence up front can save many dollars for all involved.

WHAT IS YOUR WORST NIGHTMARE, OR THE FUNNIEST THING THAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU?

Tawagoshi (Tokyo): Since Japan is a mainly male-dominated society, it's hard for some Japanese men to accept women as equals. I frequently meet contacts in the lobby of the Mission, introduce myself, escort them to my office and begin the formalities. They often assume that I am the office assistant. It usually takes me a few minutes to convince them that I am the person they are there to meet, and we share a good laugh.

Palamides (Los Angeles): It was early May 1999, and a ministerial high-tech trade mission was visiting San Francisco. The Honourable Sergio Marchi was the guest of honour. I arrived in a sweatshirt and blue jeans. Several questioned my attire. My initial response was: "No one told me that this was a formal event." The truth eventually came out: the airline had misplaced my luggage.