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had trained more than 200 brokers, and some 2000 companies had taken part in the program. New Zealand is another convert to the "hard" business networks doctrine. Over 150 brokers were trained in two years, and are now helping New Zealand firms to develop a network, often with government co-funding. Taking this concept a step further, Tradenz, in partnership with the ANZ Bank, is now embarking on a local cluster-development program. Tradenz believes that the incubation of firms within a particular city or region leads to networking that will facilitate the development of export-focussed hard networks.

3. Human Resources

A growing trend among a number of IBD agencies is the hiring of staff with significant private-sector experience, with the expectation that many will return to the private sector. Agencies such as the Swedish and Norwegian Trade Councils and the Finnish Foreign Trade Association have contracted private-sector Trade Commissioners, to ensure an understanding of and focus on the needs of their business clients. In the case of Sweden, these Trade Commissioners are expected to apply their business and experience ties to the continual benchmarking and improvement of their services.

Other organizations (e.g. Austrade, Tradenz) are also increasingly relying on staff with more private-sector experience, frequently on a contract basis. Although turnover is expected to be higher

than in a diplomatic service, this private-sector influx is seen as contributing to a more dynamic, client- and results-focussed culture.

4. Public-Private Partnerships in the Delivery of IBD Services

Perhaps one of the more subtle means by which IBD agencies absorb private-sector input is through partnership arrangements with the private sector, which regularly influence agency services. These partnerships are frequently initiated as a means to expand the delivery network for an agency's services in a cost-effective manner.

These arrangements have frequently led to closer ties with the private sector, chambers of commerce, etc. In Norway, all of the NTC's regional offices were closed in favour of arrangements undertaken with private-sector business consultants who are retained to do various company reviews and to help SMEs develop business and export plans. The NTC view is that contracting out these services provides greater efficiency and higher quality at lower overall cost. Austrade has responded to a recent budgetary crunch by

starting to franchise its services. Local chambers of commerce will deliver Austrade services, via on-line links to the Agency's network. Another example is the British approach of having officers collocated with the private-sector "Business Links" offices. With 200 offices, it is also one of the most extensive networks.

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A listing of all missions web sites can be found at: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/english/missions/menu.htm>