



4.1.4 The issue of "Spam"

Spam or unsolicited e-mail messages, are having a huge impact on how organizations communicate with each other. If we send a company an unsolicited e-mail, are we *spamming* them? The short answer is no, *unless the message is not relevant or of interest to the user*. A general unsolicited, broadcast message stating the virtues of the Trade Commissioner Service to all types of companies would likely fall into the spam category, and could elicit a negative response. However, by contacting companies who manifested an interest in your market through VTC registration or some other means; by personalizing the message; and, by making it as relevant to their individual needs as possible, you are not sending spam.

Successful Practice Example:

One post began with an "informal" communication of either fax or e-mail (at the discretion of the sector/officer) to an appropriate contact person who would be determined in advance. Then, BDOs would telephone the company via the contact person directly, as their in-depth knowledge allowed them to personalize their conversation to the individual businesses.

4.1.5 A combination of vehicles often works better than a single vehicle.

Sending an e-mail with a telephone follow-up introduces you in a non-threatening, non-interactive way and prepares for a personalized communication. Voice-mail with an e-mail message can work just as well from time-zones where direct phone calls are difficult.

4.1.6 Personal visits

Trade commissioners should take advantage of the TCS Officers Outreach program whenever they come to Canada to arrange to meet with some of the target companies. This could serve as a great opening to the first conversation with them.

4.2. Prepare the Pitch

The "pitch" is one of the key determinants of success or failure of the initiative. You must prepare a message which is clear, crisp and concise, and most importantly, which states up front a clear benefit of engaging with the officer. The objective of the pitch is to elicit enough interest from the client to engage them and pursue the opportunity further, on their terms. It should *not* be to simply inform them of the TCS services, or in the other extreme, to convince them to conduct a visit to your market.

Even if you are not "selling" anything, as is the case with the TCS, you must remember that you are in competition with an average of 250 messages a day² which are targeting your prospective client for attention. Your prospective client needs to quickly realize the benefit of interacting with you.

2 Kotler, Philip et al., *Principles of Marketing*, page 504.