



As a trade commissioner you are not trying to sell anything. You do not need to sound like a salesperson. The right mindset for you to adopt going into any prospecting call is: “I am going to start a conversation.” This will ensure that you make a good impression with your new local contact.

When preparing for your call, remember that you only have one chance to make a good first impression. So avoid a weak or overused opening statement such as:

- ◆ “Could I have a few minutes of your time?”
- ◆ “How are you today?” or
- ◆ “I was wondering if maybe you would be interested in...”

Even if you do nothing else, eliminating these statements will increase your success rate. Your local contacts want to develop partnerships with you—and not only the products or services Canadian companies can offer. The most effective way to do this is by acknowledging that your call is unexpected or may be an interruption. Here is an example that you may use:

- ◆ “Have I caught you at a bad moment?” or
- ◆ “Is this a bad time?”

This works because when it comes to receiving an unsolicited call, it is always a bad time. Hearing from a caller who recognizes this can be immediately refreshing for your prospect. As a result, your local contacts will relax, and say “It’s always a bad time!”. Second, they may follow with “but what’s up?” or “why are you calling?” When this has been said, you have been given permission to move on. It is now your prospect's decision to stay on the call, not yours; this is a very powerful invitation.

3.2 Creating the right opening statement

Reinforce the relationship you have started to develop with a prospect by sharing an experience where you have helped others in the same industry or position as your contact. This helps the contact to focus on the benefits of doing business with Canada. Demonstrate to your local contact that you understand his/her business issues and that you are qualified to help address them.

When preparing an opening statement, you should consider three questions:

1. Which industry segment are you addressing and what is the level of the manager you are talking to?
2. Why should your local contact care about developing relationships and partnerships in general?
3. Why should your local contact care about developing relationships and partnerships with Canada?