

HELPING CANADIANS SUCCEED IN WORLD MARKETS

With a presence in 140 locations around the world, Canada's Trade Commissioner Service has the inside edge when it comes to helping Canadian business people increase their exports.

As a trade commissioner at the Canadian trade office in Cairo, Magdy Ghazal is quick to see red. That's red as in lentils, of which Egypt is the world's largest importer. And thanks to Ghazal's efforts, its main supplier today is Canada.

Egypt traditionally bought red lentils from Turkey and Syria, but those countries could not keep up with the growing demand. In search of new sources of supply, Egyptian importers approached Ghazal at the trade office.

"Canada didn't produce red lentils," says Ghazal, "but I contacted Pulse Canada—the national industry association for pulse growers—and the producers themselves, and convinced them that if they planted red lentils Egypt would buy them. We arranged for the importers to give them a letter of credit. The Canadian industry responded well and they went to the lab to come up with a hardy seed. Exporting started with a few containers, then a few more, and then boatloads. Now Canada has 70 percent of the Egyptian market."

As Chief Trade Commissioner and Assistant Deputy Minister of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), John Gero is proud of the work of Magdy Ghazal and many others in delivering programs and services to Canadian exporters. "Our most valuable—and value-added—asset is our people," he says. "Without them, we wouldn't be able to do very much for Canadian exporters."

The people Gero refers to are the women and men who work for Canada's Trade Commissioner Service (TCS). They include Ottawa-based staff plus 530 trade professionals in 140 locations throughout the world.

The government puts much effort into negotiating trade agreements to open up markets—and opportunities—for Canadian business people. "The agreements open doors," acknowledges Gero, "but the commitment and expertise of our people is often the critical factor in a company's winning or losing an international contract. Their knowledge of and familiarity with international markets, and the relationships they have established with foreign businesses and governments, can go a long way toward helping our companies succeed in the global arena."

Businesses of all kinds rely on TCS, from small and medium-sized enterprises cutting their teeth abroad to experienced firms looking to increase their share of international markets.

Whether to help understand other countries' trade practices, learn more about a target market or current regulations, find a likely trading partner or close deals, TCS officers in Atlanta, London, Mexico City, Singapore and elsewhere help Canadian business people make the most of potential opportunities.

A few years ago, DFAIT embarked on a major revitalization of the Trade Commissioner Service. Gero explains, "We took a good hard look at the



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types of services we were offering, and the time and resources required to deliver these services. We wanted to make sure that we were giving our clients what they needed, in the most effective and efficient manner possible."

The result was a solid commitment to deliver six key or core services (see box). "These are the services that our clients told us would help them succeed," says Gero.

Determining potential

The first core service is helping firms assess their real potential in a market. TCS officers advise companies on doing business in the market, indicate major barriers and regulations, and notify companies of upcoming events, such as trade fairs, conferences, seminars and trade missions.

"Once we've assisted our clients to evaluate a market," says one TCS officer, "we can then help them decide