

TRAINING

By Linda
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Latin America, Caribbean and Mexico

There was a tremendous response from colleagues in the Latin America, Caribbean and Mexico markets to the training program in Miami. Given the large size of the training sessions it would have been preferable to have had smaller, more regular sessions.

The participants valued the useful tools and Ottawa update, though many would have also liked to have had senior management on hand to provide guidance and feedback. Senior management was invited to participate, and we thank those who made the effort.

Many felt they had acquired a better understanding of how the system works, the sources of support available to posts, and the needs facing Canadian exporters. However, with differing market realities and posts' capabilities vis a vis levels of service, the approaches to client service will require some modification.

There was also general concern expressed over the duplicity of systems in Canada - questioning the ability of domestic service providers to help the Canadian exporter - and how to project the image of Team Canada. There was a general belief that dealing effectively through partnerships will help improve service to clients.

Asia - Pacific

With a strong response from our posts in Asia-Pacific, we were again faced with large numbers attending the training sessions in Manila and Seoul. More time would have been preferable.

Feedback mirrored comments received

from the other training sessions with emphasis on the interactive approach, the useful reference tools, and industry overview which provided many with a better understanding of Canada's strengths in services and the support available from HQ. It was acknowledged that the proactive work by posts would vary according to individual operational constraints.

Many would have welcomed further discussion on best practices (actual review of strategies being used by posts) and expansion of the subject matter to include real cases from their region, the role of relationships in Asian markets, strategic alliance assistance, and sectoral areas among others. Involvement by Canadian companies on what they expect from posts was also welcomed.

For your information, we are planning to conduct a number of client surveys this year. We will be taking our own specialized computer equipment across Canada to ask Canadian exporters about our services — and will share the findings when tabulated.

Overwhelming feedback from all three sessions supported the training and considered the courses a must for all trade staff and Heads of Missions. Participants felt that it should be available on a more frequent basis (continuous learning) and mandatory (along with more frequent updates from Ottawa). As one participant summed it up - the training was "the best deliverable from DFAIT in a decade".

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New CIBS on the Block

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to create the evergreen CIBS Compendium, an on-line "evergreen" record of all the IBD activities planned by the federal and provincial governments in Canada and overseas. By logging onto various federal and provincial Web sites, readers will have a detailed description of all the trade, investment, S&T and R&D projects of the federal and provincial governments — including missions, fairs, market studies, seminars etc. Sponsors

of the various events will be responsible for keeping their details up to date. They can even use the CIBS Compendium as a publicity vehicle for their event, by ensuring that the "What's new!" field of every activity description has the sort of information that will attract the right types of firms.

Thanks to all who participated in this year's exercise... and stay tuned for more reports on the business community's reaction!

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