Introduction

The modern global economy is characterized by a growing interconnectivity of geographic markets, industrial supply chains and trade facilitation systems and services. This ever-deepening functional integration in the global economy is enabled by "rapidly increasing industrial capabilities in developing countries, capabilities that reside both in local firms and the affiliates of multi-national firms, and new computer-mediated approaches to real-time integration of distant activities. … As a result, opportunities have opened up for firms to engage with the global economy—as buyers, suppliers, sellers, distributors, contractors, and service providers—in ways that were impossible even a few years ago."[1]

Many well known private sector names such as Dell, Acer and Wal-Mart, as well as lesser known names such as Brooks Sports, Burton Snowboard, Columbia Sports, Golden Chang and Grupo Bimbo, have actively embraced these developments. Thus, for many firms, technology-based supply chain management is no longer an add-on feature of their organizational model; it has become a core component that influences their operating and manufacturing models.

These developments pose a challenge to trade promotion organizations (TPOs). As the International Trade Centre recently noted, "Trade Support Institutions must … continually justify their existence and their right to demand scarce resources. This can be done only if they remain relevant, offer needed services to their client exporters, and strive to provide the best services at a competitive cost."[2] Some TPOs, and related trade facilitation agencies already have embraced these developments, including Korea Trade Network (KTNet), Hong Kong's Digital Trade and Transportation Network (DTTN), and Mexico's Nacional Financiera (Nafinsa).

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[1] Sturgeon (2006); at p. 35.

[2] International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO (2004).