

Canadian exporters to Singapore may employ a number of trading methods. Exports may be handled through an established trading firm with branches in Singapore and throughout Singapore's marketing area or, if a substantial volume is involved, they may establish a branch office. The majority of Canadian firms, however, engage a Singapore agent.

The strength of the Canadian company and its products will depend much on the competence, credibility, and image of the local representative. The key to securing sustained business in local and regional markets is ensuring that the chosen representative is both knowledgeable about your product and familiar with the business practices in the particular market or sector. It is often necessary to rely on the agent to arrange appointments with appropriate local business representatives as well as to process necessary documents through official channels.

Experienced Canadian exporters have found that business development requires positive initial contacts, the establishment of legitimacy, and patience. Frequent visits to Singapore will enable you to maintain contacts and legitimacy while concurrently supporting the efforts of your representative. In addition, technical support through regular training sessions in the latest developments and innovations as they relate to your product is of paramount importance to your agent as well as your product's credibility in the market.

The selection of an agent should be approached with some caution. There is no agency law in Singapore: agreements between agents and their principals are governed by the normal law of contract. It may be best to appoint a representative for a one-year trial period, the appointment to be confirmed if performance is satisfactory. Detailed current credit reports of the kind available in Canada are not yet available in Singapore. The Canadian High Commission in Singapore can, however, provide a status report on the suitability of a local firm as an agent, from which its credit-worthiness may be judged. Such reports are frequently based on first-hand information obtained by a credit agency and take several weeks to compile. Costs incurred by such a search when undertaken by a referral company are billed to the Canadian company.

Bear in mind that your chosen agent's first language may not be English, however well he or she speaks it.