



The market profile

The thoughtfully prepared market profile can be one of the exporter's strongest trump cards. It can provide a wealth of essential information — virtually everything the exporter needs to know to prepare the company to take advantage of the available opportunities and to forewarn it against, or at least to forewarn it of, any potential problems peculiar to doing business in the selected market.

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Possession of current, accurate knowledge of national trade statistics, business practices and customs, the quality and reliability of transportation and communication systems, the economic situation, political environment and stability, credit standing, the strength of domestic and foreign competition to be faced and a host of other vital intelligence frequently make the difference between a profitable export contract and a red-ink profit and loss statement.

Gathering the masses of detailed information required for a comprehensive market profile is a big job and an important one, but it's not an impossible one, even for a very small company. At even the smallest company's beck and call are the combined resources, the know-how, the expertise, the assistance programs and the experienced, on-the-spot trade personnel of government departments and agencies, federal and provincial Crown corporations and private sector business and trade organizations. Each of these organizations is an active member of an export trade team dedicated to building Canada by building its export trade and each is there to support your export program. (See *The players* section.)

What basic information do you need to paint a realistic picture of your target market? Essentially, it's the same kind of information you need to identify your most attractive domestic markets . . . but there's a difference. That market is THERE, where you aren't, not HERE, where you live and are familiar with the business environment. Don't make the potentially expensive mistake of assuming anything — check it out.

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You'll want information in six main categories: General Background, Market Accessibility, Sales Potential, Regulations, Terms of Payment and Currencies, and Distribution. In each of these categories you'll want answers to some specific questions.

General background

- What is the size of the country, its climate and terrain? What is its distance from Canada?
- What is the size and distribution of its population and income?
- Does the country have plans for development? Are they likely to enhance or diminish acceptance of your products and services? Are they likely to affect the purchasing power of your customers or the attractiveness of your products and services?
- What is the country's economic situation, its balance of trade, its foreign exchange regulations, its credit standing? Are there cultural, religious or political considerations which must be taken into account?

Market accessibility

- Are there any restrictions on imports through taxes, import duties or quotas? What are the policies and attitudes towards imports from Canada?
- What is the actual access situation, specifically, for your products? Is it in the process of improving or is it deteriorating?
- Are there currency controls? Is currency convertible?
- Are there bilateral trade agreements favouring the goods and services of other countries?