

The Trade Commissioner Service and the Exporter

The Trade Commissioner Service of the Department of External Affairs has an extended network of trade offices in other countries. The primary focus of these offices is to assist Canadian companies seeking export markets. While the scope of services offered by the trade offices abroad is fairly comprehensive, there is a limit to the extent of personal service a trade commissioner or commercial officer can offer to an individual company. It is therefore worthwhile to note what the Trade Commissioner (Service) can and cannot do.

What the Trade Commissioner Can Do

If this is your first venture abroad or, if you are assessing a new market, the trade commissioner can do some preliminary market research for you — provided you give him the necessary information about your product.

Having identified your priority markets, obtain the latest list of trade posts around the world from your nearest Industry, Trade and Commerce/Regional Economic Expansion office. Write to the trade posts in your priority markets providing:

- A summary of your company.
- Your previous experience as an exporter.
- Precise descriptions of your product.
- Important selling features.
- Type of distributor you are looking for.
- Tentative travel schedule.
- Request for introductions or appointments with potential agents, buyers, or both.
- 5-10 copies of your sales brochures, preferably in colour with multilingual copy.

The trade commissioner can assist you in determining:

- Whether your product can be imported into the market.
- Whether your type of product is already supplied by local producers, importers, or both.
- Buying practices in the market.
- The quality of support services and infrastructure for the market: banking, shipping, storage and brokerage facilities.
- Import policies and restrictions on imports.
- How to quote in the market.
- Social, cultural, business and market conditions.

Once you have completed your marketing plans in a particular country, inform the trade commissioner of your proposals. He can help you market your product by:

- Contacting local agents to assess their interest in carrying your product.
- Recommending suitable agents.
- Supplying credit and other business information on these local firms or agents.
- Recommending translation firms.
- Advising on advertising modes and preferences in the country.

When you are making a sales visit to a specific market, contact the trade post *well in advance*. Given sufficient notice, the trade commissioner can:

- Arrange your business appointments.
- Receive your mail and messages.
- Recommend a suitable interpreter.
- Identify sources of legal counsel, banking services and the like.

Even after you are firmly established in the market, the office of the trade commissioner can continue to assist and smooth the