

Harmony in the Cacophony CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

BASIC BUSINESS INSIGHT:

Clients expect Trade Commissioners to have the ability to understand basic business issues.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS:

Clients expect to receive respect, courtesy and friendliness from Trade Commissioners.

"In (a European post), they didn't want to have anything to do with me. He wasn't interested. It was 5:15, he got up and said 'I'm finished for the day, could you call this gentleman a taxi'."

INTEREST IN THE BUSINESS CLIENT:

Clients have a basic expectation that Trade Commissioners will take some time with them.

AVAILABILITY:

Clients expect Trade Commissioners to be available, having given two weeks notice of their arrival; and that Trade Commissioners demon-

strate an interest in meeting, spending time with them, and assisting the visiting business client.

"We often can make mistakes when doing business in a foreign country — Trade Commissioners can help us understand cultural differences."

CONSISTENCY AND INTEGRATED SERVICE:

Clients expect co-ordination and integration between different departments, notably to deal with trade and immigration issues and service co-ordination issues with the International Trade Centres.

"Trade Commissioners shouldn't be afraid of using the weight and influence of the Canadian government... it works, and it helps us. The other countries use it a lot. Our Trade Commissioners are more timid and they don't use their influence enough...they've always been like boy scouts on this one."

A Secondment Experience CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ested in having DFAIT officers coming out of posts because of the (possible) language ability and also because of their sectoral and cultural knowledge and experience. For the DFAIT officer, it can be an excellent opportunity to stay within or enter an area of interest or specialty. Working domestically in a region, as well, gives access to provincial government trade development activities and officers, and regional development organizations such as Western Economic Diversification. The simple fact of knowing more people — a new network — will also prove useful on future assignments. Any department is a myriad of sections, responsibilities, policies, etc., so knowing a few key contacts can make life much easier when you are looking for information in the future.

On the administrative side, one is entitled to all the same benefits that one receives as an employee of DFAIT, including tuition fees for courses such as language maintenance. DFAIT pays the salary and then bills the host department, but all work-related expenses are covered by the latter. There is no resultant time lag or administrative nightmare (to which you, the employee, are privy, in any case).

I was lucky to land in an office with a great supervisor and a great staff, which has obviously contributed to making this experience a positive one. When you are considering your next assignment, think more broadly — consider a secondment.

Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former

Albert Einstein