

EXPORT QUOTATIONS

Many companies begin exporting when they receive an unsolicited request for their goods from a prospective foreign buyer. The initial contact with a prospective buyer may have occurred through a trade show, a foreign trade mission, or some other personal medium. Alternatively, the Canadian firm might have been recommended to the buyer by a third party. In any case, the buyer usually sends the manufacturer a request for a quotation on the price of a specified number of units of a product, delivered to a particular location.

The foreign inquiry and an initial response are the first stages in what may become a lengthier process by which the terms of a transaction are negotiated and finalized. There is no deal, however, until both sides are satisfied with its terms.

RECEIVING INQUIRIES AND ORDERS

When inquiries are received from a prospective buyer, it is essential that all communication is clearly understood by both parties. The process starts with procedures for handling foreign correspondence.

All foreign correspondence (letters, faxes) should be passed directly to the division with direct responsibility for exports. If the inquiry arrives by telephone, the call should be routed to the export sales staff, who should log it, make notes of the conversation and ask for subsequent written confirmation. These simple measures can save considerable confusion when trying to reconstruct what was agreed to some weeks after the fact.

Letters or faxes written in a foreign language should be handled with special care. Unless a firm has someone on staff who is fluent in the language and its business idioms, it is best to have the letter translated by a professional translation service. The original letter should remain attached to the translation for subsequent reference and verification.

When responding to an inquiry from Mexico, companies should not attempt to use Spanish unless someone on staff is familiar with it. Canadian firms can use English or French in their correspondence and leave any translation to the Mexican correspondent. If communication occurs by telephone, the caller should plan what is going to be said in advance. For example, compiling a list of all discussion topics can be an extremely useful and time-saving exercise.