

export support has a *major* effect on the competitiveness of exporters. Is the effect sought that a fair or mission user becomes a better exporter? Does better mean more successful? How is success defined? Could it mean introducing a company with an export-ready product to exporting? Is the level of export know-how and experience an appropriate effect?

Often evaluations do not find a *major* effect that is attributable to a program. This neither negates the value of a program, nor discounts the importance of its effect. It simply means that expectations of a major effect may be unwarranted and most probably export support contributes only incrementally to export sales. And that, through understanding the multitude of factors at work in exporting, we need to focus on those outcomes where programs are likely to make a difference.

We know that often mission participants already have good prior contacts and sales prospects in the market. Thus, sales realized by a participant may truly stem from such earlier efforts. Participants may report and program management may interpret such sales as a mission result, when in fact the latter had little or no impact. Not only may there be no yardstick for aggregate results from events, but individual outcomes reported by participants can also be misleading⁴⁵. Clearly, on one hand a company's export activities are multi-faceted and the influence of a support program is one factor among many. On the other hand programs need to focus on needs of target companies, clear, specific and measurable outcome goals and objectives.

Recent research points to the importance of combining perceptual and objective measures, as well as qualitative and quantitative ones to evaluate fairs and missions. In a recent evaluation study the image of belonging to a Canadian stand or mission as well as the assistance from government officials were rated as *excellent* by more than one-half of the participants. Nearly as many expressed satisfaction with the event arrangements (program and itinerary for mission, physical setting of the fair)⁴⁶. This contrasts somewhat with the perceived value of such events. For fair participants only 14 percent felt that they obtained a better stand location because of the government program, and 23 percent of mission participants felt that they realized better business contacts than they might have achieved on their own. Both agreed, however, that subsidy to their export marketing costs constituted the single greatest benefit⁴⁷.

Taking account of the variety of mission and fair participants' objectives, some 74 percent of mission users, compared to 38 percent of fair users, achieved 'excellent' results introducing a