

Learning to Do Business in Mexico

There are many opportunities for Canadian companies in the Mexican market. But taking advantage of them can sometimes be difficult and time consuming. Market information is harder to obtain than it is in Canada — Mexico has only recently emerged from a long period of protectionism, and many businesses have not yet fully adapted to the new market environment.

Mexicans also bring a distinctive set of values and operating methods to their business dealings. Canadians need to learn to appreciate this very different business culture, and to be flexible enough to operate in it. Potential buyers and customers like to do business with people they know personally. Getting to know them can require several trips to Mexico before serious business begins. Business relationships are built on friendship and trust. Mexicans are reluctant to offend anyone and feel more comfortable saying

“yes”, whether they mean it or not — a “yes” can mean “maybe” or even “no.”

In this environment, careful preparation, combined with the ability to adapt to constantly changing circumstances, are key factors of success. There is no substitute for first-hand market research and networking in Mexico.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade's recently released *Trade Action Plan for Mexico* supports companies as they begin to study the market, and later, as they explore and test the Mexican marketplace.

The *Export i Mexico Knowledge Base* is the centrepiece of the Action Plan, and the starting point for businesses investigating the Mexican market. This comprehensive system allows business people to research the mar-

ket in depth, and supplies them with current information on market opportunities. A special feature of the Knowledge Base is its concise evaluations of emerging market opportunities and market access issues — tools that allow business people to have their export strategy prepared when they arrive to test the Mexican waters. The Knowledge Base also offers market profiles and summaries, handbooks on business issues and a range of useful reference material. At the time of writing, about 75 per cent of Knowledge Base materials were completed and available.

Individuals and companies interested in obtaining copies of the *Trade Action Plan for Mexico* and the *Export i Mexico Knowledge Base Catalogue* should contact the Latin America and Caribbean Branch — Mexico Division (LMR), Ottawa by facsimile at (613) 943-8806.

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