

Another perception of TCs is that too much time is taken up by the organization and management of events—particularly trade fairs and missions. This task has become larger with the closure of dedicated units for fairs and missions in most geographic divisions. In many cases, the responsibility for events now rests with desk (country) officers and posts. Although important, events such as these are extremely time-consuming. The lack of clear filtering processes and demands of mounting fairs and missions means that less time is available for TCs to work in areas where they are judged to add the most value. These are one-on-one meetings with Canadian business visitors and the provision of local market and contact information.

With reduced government budgets and greater workloads, another approach that has merit is teaming.<sup>12</sup> The “Team Canada” idea is popular in Ottawa at present and can occur between DFAIT and business, and/or DFAIT and other government organizations. The former can be used to ensure greater “buy-in” and financial support for important initiatives, as exemplified in the Japan Action Plan. A contact-efficient variation is where DFAIT is able to work with a representative organization such as an industry or trade association rather than many individual companies. Partnering with other government organizations has the potential of greater coherence and efficiency. In both company and government forms, however, unless workloads are shared the only gain is a symbolic one.

The actions discussed above would, if properly implemented, enable DFAIT to manage its workload so that energies might be directed along more effective lines, thereby focusing on the most important activities and companies.

### **SERVICE QUALITY**

There is agreement that many TCs are unable to fully meet the service expectations of companies. A number of factors help explain this predicament. These are:

- Many of the same factors that have contributed to work overload
- The principle of universality
- Business and technology complexity

There is an obvious link between workload and service quality. The TC who is swamped with all manner of enquiries, visitors, events and meetings will likely be motivated more by getting the job done rather than the laudable but unrealistic goal of service excellence. Therefore, the very factors that have increased the volume of work for TCs also contribute to the reduction in service quality provided. However, service quality has also been affected by other forces discussed below.

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<sup>12</sup> This embraces but goes beyond the cost-sharing discussion above.