

THE TRAINING IMPERATIVE

BY Linda Brazeau

Training motivates people and transforms them — if you cannot change your people you cannot change the organization. The “real” resource of the department is our human capital, and it requires our investment and commitment for the future.

In a dramatically changing environment, there is an even greater need to prepare our trade personnel to effectively deliver programs and meet the needs of our clients. A redefined role of the TCS is likened to “an international business strategist to meet more sophisticated business interests and access markets in a new world trading system”. We have devoted considerable time and effort in the department to the training issue — particularly over the past year. A variety of training initiatives have been developed and/or delivered including courses on market information and intelligence (see p.4), assisting the services exporter (see p. 4) and investment and strategic alliances (see p. 5). A number of you may have had the opportunity to participate in some or all of these courses. However, there are many of you who have not and our efforts have focused on rectifying this as quickly as possible.

Last fall TFB established a professional development group chaired by Rick Mann (TOO), and comprising the Canadian Foreign Service Institute (CFSI), Personnel, T-Branch, E-Branch and geographic representation. The objective of this group was to plan and develop a strategic training framework in a most cost-effective manner. This is in direct response to the numerous industry recommendations for “more training” in new technologies and skills to better equip our trade officers. It is also a goal of the department to maintain a high standard of profes-

sionalism. We also recognized the pressing need to address gaps and deficiencies in departmental training by undertaking a catch-up exercise that complemented the mid-career and longer-term training developed by CFSI.

The professional development group hired a human resource and international business consulting firm, Euroventure Canada (Toronto) to assess the training requirements of the TCS and recommend a course framework. The study — completed in March — proposed an integrated broad-based skills course of five days to be delivered over two years to all trade officers in the service at a cost of \$2.9 million. New computer based training techniques were also introduced — for distance learning — and this is factored into our training plan.

Though the Euroventure proposal was not the final choice of the professional development group, the study findings gave us much in recognizing the changes in our organization’s context. It identified a need for clarity of our department’s role, direction and priorities — including service standards. It recognized that our trade planning and tracking system and individual performance evaluation would have to reflect the redefined role of the TCS — and this is being addressed. It also revealed a need for more contemporary management methods e.g. team management, individual priority and time management, and building strategic business and operating plans for individual posts.

A modified training plan has been adopted by the professional development group for delivery to officers abroad over the next three years at a cost of \$2.5 million. It will encompass an MI/I-Services combined course, Investment, and new Competitor Intelligence, Science and Technology and Trade Policy courses. This proposal requires funding approval by the Resource Allocation Committee and a decision is pending. We will keep you apprised of the outcome, and the scheduling of any training planned for your region.

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by David Waisglass
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“It’s a 30,000-page study that proves we don’t need to change the way we work.”