

## Canada's Trade Action Plan for Mexico

The roles of the domestic and foreign-service members of Team Canada can be compared to a relay race. The domestic members prepare the Canadian exporter at home and then pass the "baton" to members abroad to complete the race. This is a simplification. It serves to illustrate the point that to win the export race to Mexico, Team Canada members in Canada and Mexico must *both* win *their* part of the relay.

Another element underlying the new business model is DFAIT's *Trade Action Plan for Mexico*. This plan was prepared as part of Canada's International Business Strategy, which is a key component of the Team Canada concept. This plan describes a new role for the Trade Commissioner Service within the team. It sets out four broad changes that are implied by the new mandate.

1. Greater distinction between market information and market intelligence. Market information can be packaged and disseminated in Canada on a sectoral basis. Market intelligence requires on-the-ground support in Mexico.
2. Moving away from event-driven activities and towards information-driven activities based on emerging economic and market trends.
3. Greater emphasis on helping small- to medium-sized Canadian companies. The domestic partners need to place a greater emphasis on assisting such companies to become export-ready before they leave Canada. This will position them to take advantage of the intelligence-gathering capabilities of the team members in Mexico.
4. Providing customized advice to individual Canadian companies.

These new approaches are expected to apply scarce resources more effectively so as to deliver services to those Canadian companies that are most likely to expand their export activities as a result.

## Team Principles

Consultations with DFAIT staff in Canada and Mexico revealed a solid consensus that a new approach to providing trade promotion services was needed. Indeed, it was the perception of the need for change among the staff that led to this project in the first place.

More specifically, there is a widespread understanding that better *teamwork* will be the key to providing more effective support to Canada's exporters. In particular, the staff believe that sharing information, ideas, experiences, clients and contacts will make both the team and its individual members more effective. They also believe that team members should be empowered to manage the performance of their unit by participating in planning, control, coordination and developing improvements. This kind of cooperation and participation is seen as not only making the organization more responsive, but also more adaptable to Mexico's continuously changing business conditions.

There was also a broad consensus that teamwork should be guided by principles rather than a traditional hierarchical configuration. There is wide support among the staff for the proposition that specific principles