

Democratization of Information:

Information is now a commodity. We used to add value by reporting home on what was going on in the world. Our comparative advantage was exclusive access to information. This is now greatly diminished. There is now so much information from a vast array of sources assailing Canadians (government, business and civil society), that our role as information gatherers is, in some ways, obsolete. We need to move on with determination, to continue to add value by developing our capacity to generate "intelligence", i.e. usable, deployable knowledge based on reliable information, to put at our clients' disposal in a timely fashion.

We also have to develop a culture of working with other Government Departments, (OGD's), provinces, cities, agencies, indigenous groups, private sector, associations who are increasingly active in many dimensions of Canada's international relations. They already deal directly with their domestic counterparts elsewhere or in "internationalizing" their local interests.

We need, in short, to redefine our value as intermediaries to stay in business in this new environment.

Privatization:

Others are, or claim to be, capable of delivering some of DFAIT's classic services to Canadians cheaper and more satisfactorily than we do. Many question why trade promotion for Canada should be a function performed by civil servants while other countries rely more on the private sector.

Consular type services are already delivered by private entities like foreign travel advisory companies or American Express, or in extreme cases, NGO's like the Red Cross.

International information gathering is being done by global media, Internet portals and specialized firms focussed on niches, providing specific clients with highly specific data and intelligence, which we cannot match.

Most important, **we are competing on the job market** with the private sector for the kinds of individuals whom we seek.

There is no point in exaggerating these trends, but we must not hide from them either. We do add value in all our domains now; we will continue to do so if we develop a self-critical, strategic approach to our responsibilities in the future. But if we are to face these external trends successfully, we have to recognize that the first challenge to our future lies much closer to home.