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barriers. It is important to also recognize that these are investment agreements, opening the markets of the signatories to a wide range of investments and alliances that were not possible previously. Both the FTA and NAFTA have included chapters devoted to the removal of investment restrictions. Very significant are the removal of such restrictions to investment in Mexico. For the TCS, these reductions in investment restrictions will lead to a great expansion of business queries concerning investment opportunities and potential corporate "partnerships" that can facilitate international investment. In a real sense, the Trade Commissioner Service is becoming a Trade and Investment Commissioner Service. Perhaps even the name should be changed to reflect this new role.

HELPING FIRMS BECOME "EXPORT-READY"

Many Canadian businesses have not yet developed the skills and/or product mix that could enable them to participate in the global economy in the ways discussed above. Some are simply at too early a stage in their growth to have constructed a "global corporate strategy." Some have too small a management team to be able to handle the extensive and necessary dialogue with foreign firms. Many have no experience in international trade and investment, and must gradually move along a "learning curve." What should be the role of the TCS in providing assistance to these firms?

What firms need in order to become export ready ranges over the entire set of management skills. Some need engineering and production advice; others need marketing assistance; still others need information about the business practices in other countries. What, if any, is the area where TCS has an advantage in helping firms to strengthen the capabilities that would make them export- ready?

A temptation exists to suggest that agencies that are solely domestic in their mandate should focus on strengthening the pre-international competitiveness of Canadian businesses. Many firms may never develop the requisite skills and/or product mix. Would TCS assistance not be wasted on such firms? It can be argued that the special advantage of the TCS lies in its ability to link Canadian businesses with firms abroad. From this perspective, one might see a role for TCS only at the final state of export readiness, once all necessary systems have been put in place. However, the above discussion suggests that becoming export ready requires many changes throughout an organization and that the ultimate purpose determines the nature of these. This view might argue for a TCS involvement even at early stages of change--with guidance along the entire path of corporate growth. Collaboration with other government agencies devoted to facilitating small business development would offer, in this view, the necessary sense of direction for preliminary changes in management behaviour and organizational structure.

THE FUTURE STRUCTURE OF THE TCS: FROM HUB-AND-SPOKE TO GRID

The TCS is the only Canadian organization with representatives stationed permanently in each country. It is the only Canadian organization able to respond to all Canadian