

Contractors and architects make the final decisions in most cases and must be convinced as to the benefits of Canadian products. Many contractors are importing directly. A particularly interesting prospect is the 2 x 4 housing contractor aiming at a top-end market.

Evaluate Alternative Alliances

It is important to maintain a long-term relationship with an importing agent. This means prospective agents must be thoroughly assessed. The successful importers operate through several distribution channels and do not necessarily have an exclusive importer, at least at the start of their operations. Regional exclusivity might be a satisfactory compromise.

Many of the carpenters and contractors who are importing directly from North America are dealing with trading houses or distributors operating in the United States. This illustrates the drive to simplify the distribution chain, but does not necessarily ensure long-term quality control. Nor does it give the exporter any knowledge of the market.

The potential of establishing relationships with home builders who handle prefabricated and 2 x 4 houses should be assessed. This could well be an ideal situation, but would take some time to develop. (The leading 2 x 4 contractors are listed in Table 25.)

Consider Regional Markets

Although much business activity is centred on Tokyo, there are a number of distinct regional markets with substantial opportunities. Most notable is the Kansai, centred on Osaka. The northern region of Hokkaido is also interesting to Canadians due to climatic similarities and on-going interest in Canadian door, window and energy conservation technology.

Canadian Government Role in Market Development

The Canadian government has actively promoted access to the Japanese lumber products market. One particularly favourable avenue is the development of the 2 x 4 housing system for which considerable technical exchanges have been organized between Canadian manufacturers and Japanese contractors.

In addition to assistance available from the Embassy in Tokyo, the Consulate in Osaka can provide a window to the second-biggest market in Japan, a compact region that itself is larger than the entire Canadian market.

6 Trade Exhibitions and Associations

Trade Exhibitions

There are five regular exhibitions related to mill-work products. The following is a brief outline of each exhibition.

Architecture Exhibition Nagoya

Mid-Japan Economist

Tel: 052-561-5675

This exhibition has a 19-year history. About 150 exhibitors per year including 15 overseas exhibitors. Held annually in September.

Housing Remodeling Fair

Secretariat of Executive Committee International

Housing Fair

Tel: 03-589-3930

The fair has a six-year history. About 100 exhibitors per year. Held annually in March.

Japan Build

OTES

Tel: 03-915-7371

The exhibition was held for the first time December 4-7, 1989. The exhibition took over a major portion of the exhibits for the Housing Remodeling Fair and is more international in nature. Japan Build is scheduled to be held annually.

Tokyo International Good Living Show

Tokyo International Trade Fair Commissions

Tel: 03-531-3371

12-year history. Late April to early May. More than 350 exhibitors. Held annually.