

Trade Missions: Are They For You?

Does the idea of going on a trade mission seem daunting? Think again! In 2008, three trade missions were specifically designed for business women to explore market development opportunities. Whether you are a new or experienced exporter, trade missions are an excellent way to research target markets, gain valuable contacts that could otherwise take years to develop and launch your business into new markets. Trade missions offer unique insight on the country from experienced trade commissioners who know the market, valuable opportunities for business matching with local companies and government contacts, and numerous networking opportunities.

Here's a quick snapshot of the 2008 missions and some of the benefits experienced by participants:

Canadian Business Women's Trade Mission to Barbados and Jamaica, January 2008. As a result of participating in this DFAIT-led trade mission of 15 Canadian business women last year, Pernille Boulter, President of Kisserup International Trade Roots Inc. (www.kisserup.com), secured a training contract with the Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica. "The matchmaking provided by the Canadian trade commissioners was instrumental to our success," she says.

CME and ACOA Women Exporters Initiative (WEI) Mission to Philadelphia and New York City, June 2008. This week-long mission was led by former Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada Helena

Guergis (now Minister of State, Status of Women) and sponsored by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) in conjunction with Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters (CME). It was designed for women entrepreneurs without prior sales experience in the U.S. The mission featured educational seminars on the U.S. specialty food market, product packaging, labelling, retail buyer preparation, and supplier diversity; networking with local business leaders; visits to local grocery chains; and participation in the Fancy Food Show, the largest gourmet food trade show in the world.



(l-r) ACOA's Deborah Windsor, U.S. celebrity chef Guy Mitchell, chef Erin Henri of P.E.I., and Joanne Caissie of Culinary Wines

"This was a wonderful experience for my company," says Joanne Caissie, Co-Owner of Culinary Wines in Shediac, N.B., who had a booth at the Fancy Food Show in New York. It was an excellent way to showcase the company's culinary liquid seasonings used to prepare healthy and delicious food (www.culinarywines.ca). "I met great people from both ACOA and the Canadian consulate team who have a huge network and made valuable introductions. Dealing with the Consulate is phenomenal for targeting new markets. It's the next best thing to having an office there. Now, I am working on a U.S. export plan and have new contacts in grocery chains interested in specialty foods."

U.S. celebrity chef Guy Mitchell, who is a guest chef at The White House, even visited Joanne's booth at the show and delighted all with a cooking demonstration.

"I have tried the products from Culinary Wines and recommend them for all restaurants," he said. "It's the best product out there." Joanne's seasonings were even used for the preparation of White House meals during the former Administration.

Organization of Women in International Trade (OWIT) Women's Trade Mission to Monterrey, Mexico, October 2008. Supported by DFAIT and Export Development Canada, this two-day trade mission was held in conjunction with the Annual World Conference of OWIT International (www.owit.org). It included an introductory briefing session by Canadian consulate staff, business matching meetings with Mexican companies/organizations tailored to each participant, and several networking sessions with Canada's Ambassador to Mexico, Guillermo Rishchynski, the Mexican Employers' Association, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and OWIT International.

"I was introduced to the right potential partners and now hope to connect with a company that can expand my business offering," says Carol Beaul, President of IntelliTrade Inc. "There was also great value in meeting other women looking to expand their markets."

"I learned so much about Monterrey as a potential partnering location and about OWIT as well," adds Ginny Dybenko, Dean of the School of Business and Economics at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo. "A week well spent."



Participants represented all Atlantic provinces



Trade mission participants at Mexico briefing with Canada's Ambassador and Consulate staff

Upcoming Trade Mission

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November 23 - December 5, 2009**

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- Includes workshops, seminars, meetings with government officials and successful business women, trade show attendance, networking and optional business matching

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Isabel Alexander, Phancorp Inc.