



TESTtalk

By Rick McElrea

The Trade Enquiries Sourcing Team (TEST), within the Trade Liaison Secretariat (TOS), was conceived in September 1994 (see *The Trade Post* Vol.2, No.1, January 1995) and is tasked to respond to "hot" sourcing enquiries received from posts.

We have had enquiries for everything from environmental products to Aids Testing Kits to "a spray to cool the interior of a car on a hot day". To date, some forty posts have sent in over 600 enquiries. TEST has "interviewed" about 6000 companies to search out the ones interested in responding. We have found that over 80% of those companies are listed in WIN. But curiously we need to call about 12 companies to get each short list (of four or five companies) we send to you.

In the last issue of *The Trade Post*, we said you would be hearing from us directly. In mid February we mailed out the TEST

MACRO on diskette. Please use it. By completing the macro questionnaire in full, you will get a faster and more accurate response from us. The macro also serves as a handy checklist of the minimum essential information needed to interest exporters.

HOW DO WE DO IT? Here is an example. One post asked us to find "an early stage company ready to commercialize a bone factor agent" that their client had heard about. We checked WIN, BOSS, and FRASERS. The phone book listed a company in Saskatoon, who in turn informed us of an American company of the same name. No connection. We were stone cold. We called the Osteoporosis Society. They had never heard of the company, but gave us the names of doctors in Hamilton, Toronto, Calgary, and at McGill University. The doctors could not help us either, but asked that we let them know if we found it. In eliminating possibilities, we were

still below freezing. We contacted a company called Intermedico which makes a product Ostex... a name that sounded like the one we were looking for. Suddenly, we were getting warmer. It was the wrong company, but they knew of a venture capital group that was funding a research team at the Queen Elisabeth hospital. Eureka! We hope your client enters a joint venture and buys a billion dollars worth; it was a rewarding challenge.

No, they are not all like that. But you would be surprised at how many calls to companies and sector experts it takes to fill a solid lead. Now we know the challenge you face out there.

A number of posts have told us that TEST is enabling them to improve the quality and quantity of the enquiries they action. Our motto is to "do whatever it takes to fill your sourcing request. You are our client". We will try not to let you down; but if sometimes we seem slow, remember - we get hundreds of enquiries and we do want to serve you all.

We love and appreciate feedback. One piece of news we would like to hear from you is that you let us know if a sale results from any of the enquiries we have helped on. It will make us feel a part of the action too, and we could report the good news in the next article on TEST Talk.

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TFB SURVEY RESULTS UPDATE

The TFB "circular guidelines" survey report can be found on Signet in *Corporate Applications* under "Articles". If you do not have access to *Articles*, and would like a copy of the survey report, please contact TOO.