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To the objective factors mentioned above — market and product expertise, type of services offered, size, experience — which are easy to assess, two subjective dimensions should be added: reputation and motivation to serve.

Reputation is important. Surprisingly, some manufacturers engage the services of a trading house without taking the precautions normally used in choosing agents in their domestic territories. Already disadvantaged by a lack of knowledge about exporting, these companies place their trust in a trading house about which they are ignorant. Such choices bring no advantage to either party, nor to the overseas buyers.

Motivation, on the other hand, is not a dimension which can be checked with other parties. The individual manufacturing firm must assess for itself whether a trading house is strongly interested in carrying its products — in investing the time, energy and money required to develop the sale of its products abroad. The motivational aspect can be most realistically assessed in direct discussions with the head of the trading house or the trader who is taking charge of the products to be sold. Level of motivation will be reflected in questions about the products, visits to the plant and responses to manufacturers' requests. Motivation can be expected to increase when the personalities of trader and manufacturer prove compatible, and such a "fit" may be the best sign that a profitable business relationship can develop. The motivation and enthusiasm of the trading company will mirror the attitude of the manufacturer and the quality of their working relationship.

3. A list of trading companies should be drawn up on the basis of the above factors. Names of eligible companies can be collected from the ISTC directory, from the Council of Canadian Trading Houses' membership list and from AMCEQ in Quebec. A trading house accreditation from the Council is a good initial recommendation, although manufacturers are advised to investigate still further. Other sources of information to be considered are rating services (such as Dun and Bradstreet), suppliers (past and present) and, above all, the firm's own banking connections. The search for further information will not only provide a broader base on which to make the final selection, but also afford manufacturers the opportunity to become better acquainted with trading house activities. This will, in turn, develop greater confidence in the trading house and place the manufacturing firm in a better position to set objectives and plan ahead.