

Consider the matter of appointing an agent or representative carefully. Agency agreements are binding on the parties concerned and can only be terminated in accordance with existing local laws. Limited term agreements with a trial period should be considered, while open-end agreements should be avoided. It is wise to use the service of competent legal advice before making a commitment.

Experience has shown that the best way to select a distributor is face to face. Letters, brochures and credit reports have their place but don't allow the prospective representative to question you directly about your product, nor do they permit you to size up the distributor and gauge the enthusiasm that will be brought to promoting your product. The Commercial Division of the Canadian Embassy in Brussels will advise and assist in arranging appointments with suitable prospective representatives.

Direct contact may also be obtained through participation in, or visits to trade fairs. While there are many local and a few important international trade shows held each year in Belgium, many Canadian firms find they also obtain good results by exhibiting at the large international fairs held regularly in other European countries, particularly in West Germany, France and the Netherlands. The best, most aggressive Belgian agents usually attend these fairs.

There may be a temptation to think of the Belgian market as an extension of the French, Dutch or German markets. However, for most suppliers, Belgium provides a separate market which requires an individual approach.

Certainly Belgium has many of the characteristics of other northern European markets and for that reason many companies find it attractive to concentrate on Belgium for their initial effort into Europe. Experience in this market often provides valuable preparation for the French or West German markets.