

Foreword

The demands placed on Canada's Trade Commissioner Service in Mexico have changed substantially over the past several years. The volume of trade with Canada increased steadily after Mexico implemented a sweeping series of economic reforms beginning in the mid-1980s. The implementation of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 attracted a new wave of interest in Mexico, and a surge of requests for support from Canadian businesses. The trade agreement also created a whole new set of market access issues as Mexico amended hundreds of its regulations.

The following year, the Government of Canada introduced the Team Canada concept. This initiative was designed to coordinate the trade promotion efforts of government departments. The Team Canada concept reinforced the role of the Trade Commissioner Service: to identify and assess emerging markets, improve Canadian access to those markets, and provide market intelligence and support.

The Team Canada concept had many implications for the way that the Commercial and Economic Section of the Canadian Embassy in Mexico City and the consulates in Monterrey and Guadalajara fulfilled their mandates. In response, members of the Trade and Economic Program initiated a series of discussions to evaluate the needed changes. They concluded that they would need an entirely new business model. The model would have to include a team structure, redefined roles within the team and a new set of service standards. Such broad changes also implied the need for a training program, a plan for systematic implementation, and a method of assessing the performance of the new approach.

Guy E. Salessé, Deputy Director, Mexico Division (LMR), identified the need for the new business model and initiated the process of its development. In collaboration with Denis Thibault, Minister Counsellor at the Canadian Embassy in Mexico, they conceptualized the process and assigned a team to focus on developing the new approach. A team effort was mounted within the Department to take action on the ideas put forward by the staff in Mexico. Karl Boudreault, Senior Evaluation Manager, Office of the Inspector General (SIXE), was assigned the job of managing the project. Consultants were retained to facilitate the interviews, perform the research and provide the final concept for the new business model. They included Diane Charron, partner of Charron Dunlop and Daniel Dubé, partner of Samson & Associates.

The work was completed with the full cooperation and participation of the staff of the Commercial and Economic Section in Mexico City, Monterrey and Guadalajara. The project team is grateful for the insights of the staff: their practical knowledge of the current work process was essential to the validity of the new model; their continued cooperation and enthusiasm will be instrumental to making the new approach effective.

This guide is the end product of this broadly consultative exercise. It has two principal goals: to elaborate a vision for the new business model, and to provide a practical plan for putting it into action. The work was carried out in Mexico City, Monterrey and Guadalajara, and was limited to trade activities within Mexico. But it is anticipated that many of the ideas developed during the project will have broad application within the Trade Commissioner Service. The trade environment in Mexico has evolved more rapidly than in most countries, but we believe Trade Commissioners around the world are confronted with similar challenges.

