

MEASURING OUR SUCCESS

By Bill
Skinner

In today's environment of fiscal restraint and public scrutiny, the Trade Commissioner Service is pressured to provide increasingly valuable assistance to SMEs in particular and to Canadian exporters in general. To demonstrate this level of service, we have traditionally depended on two existing measuring systems: the Trade and Investment Post Planning System (TIPPS) and the Trade Tracking System (TTS). However, to ensure our performance is measured and monitored efficiently, effectively, and most importantly, credibly, TPP is proposing that these two operating systems shift their current *activity-based* focus to a *client service* focus.

This *activity-based* focus has, in the past, provided us with useful information on visitors, inquiries, trade events, and an overview of the activities of Canadian companies within a territory. However, the credibility of the information is rendered questionable because of the large number of items to report on (58) and a general lack of accountability. In addition, an increasing emphasis on event planning has led to a decreased focus on market intelligence gathering and information reporting. Simply put, the current approach looks at what the Canadian companies themselves are doing or could be doing, and ignores the level of service or client satisfaction.

However, with a *client service* approach, the focus is instead on what the TCS can do for the Canadian exporting industry. Such an approach plans and measures:

- what services the Post plans to deliver to Canadian exporters,
- what services the Post has delivered successfully, and
- client satisfaction, which will in turn assist future planning.

As a result of several consultative focus groups with trade officers and clients, TPP is proposing that Posts, ITCs

and HQ plan and measure, from a client-focused perspective, five service groups:

- market information and intelligence,
- advisory, counselling, and education,
- advocacy,
- facilitating partnering relationships, and
- organizing events.

Monitoring visitors to posts and collecting success stories will further the planning process.

To be successful, the proposed client planning and tracking system must:

- provide management with accurate, credible, and useful information,
- be easy to use and not increase the workload of trade officers,
- produce a better link between the two existing systems (TIPPS

TPP is proposing to shift the Trade Tracking and Post Planning Systems from an activity-based focus to a client service focus.

and TTS), and

- include the planning and measurement of client satisfaction delivered by HQ and the ITCs.

The development of Windows-type software (which will be totally integrated with WIN and TAMS, see p. 7) will provide a system to capture client information easily, making client planning and tracking a simple, daily routine for trade officers. This data collection and management system will in turn provide officers, post managers and Headquarters with client information that is based on timely qualitative and quantitative data.

TPP proposes to implement the reformed planning system by June 1995, with the roll-out of the new client tracking system planned for early summer. Extensive communications and training for all users and service providers will ensure smooth and complete implementation of these proposals – resulting in a TCS that is timely, pro-active, accountable, and credible.

Bill Skinner is Deputy Director, Trade Information Systems Division (TPP). For more information on this proposal, you may contact him at 996-1907 or via e-mail.