

At Produits Belle Baie Ltée, General Manager Valmond Chiasson feels strongly,

*"You have to be very honest with the people you are dealing with and even if they are far from your place, you have to be in constant contact with them. And it's . . . the honesty which is, I'll say, one of the most important things in the business."*

As these businesspeople indicate, clear, frequent and honest communication with the members of your network is essential. Needless to say, to get good performance the exporter should provide the tools for effective selling by the agent or distributor. For example, up-to-date, accurate, well-produced product literature is a must, but a tool overlooked by too many exporters. Product training is another, as is advertising support, and so on.

If you show the agent and distributor your seriousness about selling in their market, and if you treat them as an extension of your own company, the chances are that you'll do well. The marriage of such market knowledge (the agent/distributor) and product/service knowledge (the exporter) can produce a real competitive edge.

For companies planning to service customers directly from headquarters, senior executives and domestic sales staff can double-up in what are often far-flung foreign markets for only so long. Recruiting export sales staff will soon become a necessity, and this calls for a special kind of person. As Bert Kinner, marketing manager — seeds, of the Alberta Wheat Pool comments: "If I started from scratch . . . I would look for a strong team of people who enjoy being successful in the export market environment."

While highly desirable for some companies, finding the right sales people is no easy matter. Don Park, Dicon Systems Limited, vice-president sales and marketing, sums up the problem when he states, "The problem about getting high calibre salespeople is why would a good . . . person want to be away from home for two or three weeks a month?" Other award winners, however, have been able to find people that relish the overseas challenge.

Few companies will set up overseas sales offices as a first exporting step, but some may if they choose to concentrate on one or a few new markets. Generally, they are advised to employ nationals in these offices, as mentioned earlier.