

Five Ps are Positive Steps toward Succeeding in India

Having a good product or service certainly is essential in selling to foreign markets. Equally essential, but perhaps less obvious, is having the right mindset, one that can be acquired by adopting the "five Ps".

Perspective: Have realistic expectations. India is a rapidly developing economy, with experienced traders and strong global links. Foreign competition is present and getting stronger.

Preparation: "Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance." Do your homework before buying a plane ticket. Does your business plan have a market entry strategy for India? If not, why not?

Protocol: Understand local culture. Be prepared to

work with a local partner.

Participation: Consult with Trade Commissioners in Delhi and Bombay and other Team Canada members who are critical to your success.

Perseverance: Make regular visits to the market. Do not be discouraged if success is not immediate. Perseverance is paying off for a good number of Canadian companies in India.

CULTURAL, BUSINESS TIPS

Just as the adoption of the "five Ps" can be beneficial to business, so too can the acquisition of an appreciation of a country's cultural and business practices. This applies particularly to India which, for many entrepreneurs, remains a market both mysterious and exotic. Following are some observations worthy of note.

- **Names** often indicate whether a person is Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. Address people by their given names only if requested to do so. Professional titles (Doctor, Professor) are used, when appropriate.

- **Greetings** between most Indians are with the "namaste" gesture (bending gently with palms kept together below the chin) and rarely with a handshake. Indian men and very westernized women may offer to shake hands with foreigners, but a Western woman should not initiate a handshake with an Indian man; instead, she should wait for him to offer one; if he does not, she should nod and smile.

- **Business negotiations** require time and patience. Impromptu business meetings are common. Plan on several visits before a decision is reached.

- **Communications** by most Indians, particularly where "yes" and "no" answers are expected, are usually vague. "No" may be expressed by saying "I'll try." A smile or head jerk may indicate "yes" but can also mean "I don't know."

- **Business relationships** in India are highly personal. Indians are very interested in the family life and values of a potential partner. Invitations to visit the home of an Indian colleague are common and are an essential step in building rapport.

- **Dinner invitations** and home visits frequently are extended to visiting business people. Unless hosts are wearing footwear, guests at a meal in a private home should remove their shoes before entering. Gifts of chocolate, Indian sweet meals or flowers are appropriate. Do not wrap presents in white or black; such colours are considered unlucky.

Approaches to Business Vary

Potential partners may be found in *Member Companies of the Confederation of Indian Industries Interested in Doing Business with Canada*. Contact the DFAIT InfoCentre (see box bottom page 12).

Indian agents are a vital link in India's complex selling processes. Most Canadian companies find an agent invaluable in guiding them through the maze of regulations and red tape.

Joint venture arrangements often are preferred when the Canadian firm is bringing some form of technology or know-how, rather than a specific product, to the partnership. In the beginning, the partnership tends to be of equal (a 50-50) value.

International science and technology links —

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