

Advertising and promotional literature

Promotional literature plays a vital role in the success of a product overseas. Pay attention to the literature that supports and accompanies your product.

- Examine your current literature to see if it can be adapted to suit both your domestic and foreign markets. Some companies use English, French and Spanish, the most universal languages of trade, in their literature and catalogues to avoid the expense of separate publications in each language.
- Make liberal use of colour photographs and illustrations of the product and its application; this helps to avoid the need for lengthy textual descriptions (and their translations), especially in regions where the level of literacy is low.

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- Don't scrimp on translation costs. Hire the best translators you can find. Sloppy use of language can give rise to misunderstandings and to customer fears of potential sloppiness in your product or service.

- Make sure the colours you use in your literature conform to local tastes and preferences. (In some parts of Africa, purple is associated with witchcraft.)
- Metric is the standard of measurement in most countries. Ensure your specifications are metric or that you provide metric equivalents.

Scheduling your time

Sooner or later the time will come for your first overseas trip and one of the most critical factors to its success will be how efficiently you organize your time. Here are some time-planning DOs and DON'Ts to keep in mind.

Don't try to cram too much business or too many countries into your first trip.

DON'T start out on a foreign marketing trip without preplanning and organizing it carefully.

DO leave yourself a day or so at the start to get over your jet-lag. Use the time to check in with the Canadian trade commissioner and to wander about, looking, listening and generally getting a feel for the country.

DON'T try to cram too much business or too many countries into your first trip. Two countries in two weeks are probably all you can effectively absorb in a single trip, particularly the first one.

DO plan to spend at least three days (or a week if it is a major market) in each place you visit. You'll learn and retain as much about the country, its people and the market by osmosis as you would in a frantic round of back-to-back meetings.

DON'T forget that in many Far Eastern and Southern European countries, time isn't perceived in quite the same way as it is at home. Where attitudes toward time are more relaxed, you may find that a nine o'clock appointment means you won't be expected until about 9:30. On the other hand, in most Nordic countries punctuality is expected. Arrive for your nine o'clock meeting at 8:55 and be sure to phone if you're going to be delayed. Check the local custom with the trade commissioner.

DO get the most out of your trip by ensuring it does not coincide with traditional holiday periods. A trip to Saudi Arabia during the Moslem holy season of Ramadan would leave you with time on your hands and nary an oasis to spend it in. Similarly, not much work would be accomplished in Rio during Carneval.