

# POINTERS

**A**s a successful business person, you've had experience in selling and marketing your product or service in Canada. This section addresses some of the subtle and not-so-subtle differences between selling on your home turf and selling abroad.

The tips included here have been learned the hard way, through trial and error, by seasoned business people in their initial export marketing ventures. The list is by no means a comprehensive one. However, this section can provide you with a partial checklist of things you might overlook in the rush to respond to an attractive export opportunity.

## Communicating overseas

Language, not numbers, is the medium of communication whether it's by telephone, telex, cable, facsimile or mail. Whenever possible, use the language of the recipient. It's courteous and gets you into your customer's office much faster. When you must use English or French, make it clear, simple and straightforward. Avoid North American idioms, colloquialisms and slang; otherwise, you run the risk of confusing your partner.

The letter, the oldest form of long-distance communication, may be slow, but it's sure. It serves as a permanent and tangible record of what was communicated between the sender and the recipient. Use letters whenever time permits and to confirm agreements and decisions reached over the telephone. The usual rules for domestic business correspondence apply internationally, but here are a few tips.

- Make sure your letterhead clearly conveys your company name, address and postal code, your telephone and facsimile numbers, and the word "Canada".
- If your letterhead lists branch office addresses, be sure you clearly indicate the address to which the reply should be directed.

- Unless the message can afford a leisurely ocean cruise, always ensure your correspondence abroad displays an "Air Mail" sticker on the envelope.
- Always personally (and legibly) sign your letters. Your foreign customers want to know with whom they are dealing.

*The path to  
success is  
paved with good  
intentions that  
were carried out.*

**Bob Edwards,**  
Publisher of the  
*Calgary Eye Opener*  
from 1902 to 1922

- In case of any prolonged absence from the office, make sure someone is responsible for acknowledging any mail received in your absence.

## Telex, cable, facsimile

When using telex, cable or facsimile transmission, avoid the temptation to save a few pennies by using "telegrammatic" language. What you save in transmission costs won't equal the cost of possible misunderstandings. Keep it simple — it's safer and cheaper in the long run.

As with telephone calls, always confirm telex, cable and facsimile messages by mailing a copy. It serves as confirmation and a reminder to both parties.

## Overseas telephone

When using the overseas telephone, remember that calls may often be answered by people unfamiliar with English or French. Speak slowly and clearly (but not