



PITFALLS

Personal contact is the norm in Mexico, where dependence on fax and phone is lower than in Canada. Mexicans tend to prefer face-to-face meetings. Surveys or telephone interviews may result in inaccurate data.

It is critical to verify all information gained in interviews. The majority of professionals are extremely helpful; however, the lack of hard data often leads to a discussion of personal opinions and beliefs. Such information is not always accurate. Get as many opinions as possible.

Gathering product-specific information can be a lengthy process. It is important to ensure that information previously collected remains valid throughout the process.

CHECKLIST

Have you obtained all available product-specific information in Canada before arranging to visit Mexico? The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade distributes free sector reports in Canada, and the Mexican Investment Board and U.S. Department of Commerce offer fax-back services. Electronic information sources and key publications may also be of assistance.

If you are considering a visit to Mexico, do you know exactly what you wish to accomplish? Do you have a specific plan of action? Mexican organizations should be contacted from Canada to arrange appointments, in order to avoid "down time." Contact your local International Trade Centre for information on trade shows and export missions.

Have you collected enough information to develop a marketing strategy? If not, an alternative strategy should be considered. By this stage, the exporter should have detailed information on pricing and promotion strategies, distribution channels, and potential partners, buyers and competitors.

Speed was critical...

"We always considered Mexico an area for expansion, but never moved in that direction. This time, we needed to move fast." Victoria Enterprises contacted an information specialist for assistance with electronic information searches. The specialist was able to identify the top 10 industry players, and also provided details on product lines, product recalls and pending sales. Victoria Enterprises also requested information on recent mergers and acquisitions. All this information was collected within a 10-day period for less than \$1000. The electronic medium gave the company exactly what it needed: fast, accurate information. As a result, the firm was able to purchase a Mexican company capable of manufacturing its product locally.

List the strongest opportunities for your product or service in Mexico. Are the opportunities found in the same market niches or segments that you use in Canada? If so, are these opportunities long-term or short-term? The Mexican business environment is very dynamic and opportunities may disappear quickly.

Does your company have the resources to support the marketing strategy you are considering? If not, an alternative strategy should be considered.

Have you verified the information provided by potential partners and distributors? Often, potential partners commit to "whatever it takes" to finalize a contract.