

What the client needs from you:

An up-to-date and accurate list of names, titles, organizations, addresses, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail addresses. (The list could include brief comments on why you consider each contact to be useful.)

Guidelines:

1. As a general rule, key contacts should be individuals who are known to you (That's why you suggest them as people who can provide further specialized information on the market.) If this is not the case for some of the names you suggest, clearly indicate this in your response. If you must rely on information, such as local databases and organizations, originating from a third-party source, identify the source and its reliability.
2. Let the client know promptly if you are unable to provide a complete list of contacts without doing extensive research, and suggest another source if possible. Even when you cannot supply a list of key contacts, try to refer the client to any other sources of information, such as specialized magazines, mailing or Web site addresses (see related case).
3. If you need to access any specialized local databases to develop the key contacts list and charges may apply, tell your client and obtain a payment deposit before incurring any cost.

Questions and Answers:

Q. What should I do if companies ask only for a list of buyers or distributors without providing any background?

A. Explain to the client that you need more information about why he or she has selected the market and his or her market entry strategy in order to provide an appropriate list of contacts. In some cases, such as trading houses offering commodities (e.g., fish, agri-food, raw materials, minerals, paper products), you don't need additional information on the client's strategy. Clients prefer to receive a list of buyers and distributors right away (even if unverified) who they can approach directly. Use the related standard letter and see the related case.

Q. Is it good practice to publish names of local contacts on our Web site or InfoExport?

A. Canadian clients will appreciate having access to a list of local contacts through the Web if they are assured these contacts have been verified. Prepare lists of reputable local service providers, such as lawyers, accountants, customs brokers, as well as Canadian contacts at the local Chambers of Commerce, specifying their field of expertise and interest. Check with these contacts before including them in such a list. Do not publish on your Web site the names of individuals without their approval. Make sure these contacts realize they may be approached by Canadian clients who you do not know. You need to preserve the post's reputation with local contacts. An unsatisfactory encounter with a Canadian company could hurt your relationship with the contact, even to the point of blocking future access. Restrict yourself to publishing only the names of useful organizations, without mentioning individuals.