

### **Importance of personal visits.**

Unlike other countries where one can introduce a new service by mail or by telephone, in Germany personal visits are considered as an essential first step. German business contacts will agree relatively easily to see you personally and will set aside enough time for the visit. They will require you to be very punctual if not slightly early. They will expect a brochure and will read it thoroughly.

### **Lack of published marketing data.**

Personal visits have another use in collecting market intelligence given the paucity of published data available. In Germany one has to use the grapevine as much as possible in order to understand a market.

### **Expect higher costs than in Canada.**

Most costs are higher than in Canada. The largest differences concern salaries, telecommunications, and taxation levels. This implies that margins have to be higher than in Canada in order to support the extra costs.

### **German staff are not mobile.**

Although most German executives speak fairly good English, they will be generally reluctant to move abroad. An argument put forward is that they do not want their personal routine disturbed. Another reason to refuse transfer put to Canadian employers by German staff is the attachment to their region including its natural beauty. This attitude has as a consequence that exchange programmes are rarely implemented between German subsidiaries and foreign parent companies. As a result foreign companies are disadvantaged in competing to recruit good people.

The distaste for travelling is also found amongst agents. Canadian companies who have used agents in a large number of countries often find that their German agent never comes to see them.

### **Personal relations are extremely formal.**

Never use the familiar address form 'Du', or the first name unless you are asked to, which is extremely unlikely. Always use people's full titles such as 'Herr Doctor' with their last names. If you break these rules your German counterparts will think of you as rude and therefore inferior. You will find that colleagues having worked 20 years side by side will address each other in this formal way and may never have set a foot in each other's house.

### **There is little corporate entertaining.**

Corporate entertaining is not an important feature of doing business. It is rarely expected for two reasons:

- The first reason is efficiency. If you have a meeting with a German business contact, a long time will be set aside for it, but small talk about the weather will not be made nor the latest sports results discussed. The meeting will start immediately with the core of the subject. Doing otherwise would be considered as a waste of time. If you are invited to have dinner with a business contact it is most probably because there is no time to see you otherwise and the conversation will be almost entirely professional.
- The second reason is the strong separation of personal from professional life. German executives guard preciously their personal life. And you will rarely be invited to a German colleague's home. This can be lonely for foreigners who will need a long time to settle in and create a social life for themselves.