

Networking with fellow Canadians

The mission also provided a valuable opportunity for participants to network with other Canadian businesswomen. Wendi Copeland is president of Stamp of Approval, an innovative custom products company in Vancouver that has recently shipped its first order to the United States. In addition to helping her fine-tune her knowledge about U.S. business practices and make contacts with potential U.S. distributors, the mission enabled Copeland to discover many Canadian talents she would have never otherwise encountered. As a result, she will be teaming up with three other Canadian businesswomen to launch a new product.

The president of Quebec City's Pluralité, Odette l'Anglais, also came on the mission to find out what other Canadian women entrepreneurs have to offer. Her multidisciplinary company, which specializes in project review, co-ordination and implementation, has undertaken firefighting and civil defence projects in Mexico and Colombia and is currently acting as an industrial partner for various mixed-economy projects in the Slovak and Czech Republics. During the mission, l'Anglais identified a potential Canadian partner -- a manufacturer of pressure pipes -- to team up with for overseas projects.

For Canadian women to succeed in overseas markets, says l'Anglais, they have to concentrate on areas in which they have expertise, establish solid business links with clients, and be very flexible in order to overcome the numerous obstacles on the road to export success.

Learning from their U.S. counterparts

Meetings with Washington businesswomen who own and operate communications companies gave Gainsborough Communications' Randi Hansen good insight into what the local market can bear and what to expect when approaching the U.S. marketplace. For her company, which specializes in the creation, production and distribution of video and print materials, making a strategic alliance with an American businesswoman will be key to entering the U.S. communications/production industry.

Hansen also noted that meetings with American counterparts helped her gain an understanding of the different ways business is conducted in the two countries. She believes the bonding that occurred between the participants, as well as women's flexible approach to conducting business, will overcome those differences.

Will to succeed

As Minister Marchi noted in his remarks at a luncheon honouring U.S. Secretary of Commerce William Daley, women have the capability to put forward the effort needed to succeed.

A case in point is Diane Fafard, president of the Canadian jewellery manufacturer