
details, such as arranging the time and location of the interview. Often, embassies can provide space for the interview or for the display of product samples and literature.

The purpose of the personal visit is to confirm the information collected previously, to explore further subjects that were not covered in preliminary correspondence, and to clear up any questions left unanswered or not answered satisfactorily on the initial questionnaire. How you and the agent/distributor interact personally is indicative of the potential success and longevity of the future relationship. The key to any successful business venture — and especially those which are carried out across great distances — is the ability of each party to communicate effectively and act interdependently as part of a team.

Although it is rare to sign an agent/distributor at the first meeting, the personal interview — because of the substantial travelling costs involved — should be conducted by a corporate official with the authority to approve the final appointment. In order to get a first-hand view of the company's operation, it is preferable to conduct the interview at the agent/distributor's own premises.

To evaluate the results of the interview objectively, each agent/distributor should be asked the same questions. All questions should be succinct and not phrased in such a way as to invite answers that the candidate believes you are seeking. Be aware of how the agent/distributor reacts to your questions or tries to under- or oversell the company's abilities.

Some additional guidelines have been set out below to assist you in developing a list of questions for the personal interview. Particular attention should be paid to those questions which relate directly to the market potential of your product and the agent/distributor's ability to represent you effectively.

Questions concerning the company

- number of employees;
- role of owner;
- expansion plans;
- number of branch offices;