

Key Contacts Search: *Our Competitive Edge*

It is not enough to define services – we also have to be able to deliver them! The second service defined on the Services List is Key Contacts Search. What does this mean? What are clients entitled to expect? What is the definition of a good Key Contact Search?

First of all, the purpose of the Key Contact Search is to help clients obtain a list of people in your territory who can provide more market intelligence. This list of reputable contacts in the market will help our clients refine and implement their market entry strategy. Canadian businesses turn to you for your knowledge of the market and your network of contacts.

A Key Contact Search is not a long list of companies taken from directories, databases, or the Yellow Pages. Rather, it's an up-to-date and accurate list of names, titles, organizations, addresses, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail addresses. The list should include brief comments as to why you consider each contact to be useful.

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 from a third-party source, such as local databases and organizations, identify the source and its reliability.

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, mailings or Web site addresses.

If you need to access any specialized local databases for which charges apply, tell your client and obtain a payment deposit before incurring any cost.

What you need from the client

You need a brief but clear answer to the following questions, obtained directly from the company, its Web site or WIN:

- How do you plan to enter the market: export, licence, joint venture or investment?
- How would you describe the typical buyer, distributor, agent or partner you want to work with in your target market?
- Who are the end users of your product or service? Who do you sell to in Canada and abroad, and how?

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) so they can approach them directly. Use the related standard letter and see the related case on the Horizons Web site.

This is the second in a series of articles designed to explain the TCS services.

