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I came into contact with then made me the successful businessman I am today," says Shah with complete candour. "Officers such as John Blackwood, Ron Bollman and Graham Weber gave me guidance and moral support."

The networking channels Shah developed in those early years, which also involved the commercial officers at the CHC and the Canadian Consulate in Bombay (now Mumbai), led to one export success after another.

#### Tailoring product to need

His involvement with Cubex Limited — the Canadian side of the joint-venture company and a leading manufacturer of mining and construction equipment since 1971 — goes back to 1985, when he provided consulting for international marketing.

The current joint venture, with a private-sector partner in Hyderabad, was formed in 1998 to develop an underground drilling machine tailored to India's needs. Cubex Limited found its future joint-venture partner at a mining trade show in Calcutta in 1997 — through an introduction made

by David Summers, then Commercial Counsellor at the CHC. A prototype machine developed by Cubex India is now successfully operating on a mine

rule: patience. "You have to have a long-term presence. Deals are not made quickly. It took me 21 years to be what I am today."

# Cubex Limited engaged in India

site in India, and the company has already received orders from private drillers.

#### Posts open doors

That introduction, and the outcome, demonstrate the high value Shah places on TCS services. "People are mistaken in thinking that once you're well established as an exporter you don't need the posts anymore. Cubex definitely has a presence now — we are exporting in 30 countries — but we can always use more leads."

Cubex Limited, and its joint-venture CEO, have also benefited from many other Canadian government services, including those of Export Development Corporation (EDC), Canadian International Development Agency Industrial Cooperation Program (CIDA-INC), and DFAIT's Program for Export Market Development (PEMD).

#### Companies close deals

Shah's attitude toward government services is one of use, not abuse. "PEMD was there when we needed it. But now that we're established in international markets, we don't apply for it anymore."

Similarly, he cautions new exporters against expecting the trade commissioners and commercial officers to do all the work. "The posts are there to assist you; they will give you contacts. They open the door, but you, the exporter, have to close it."

The man who has closed many an export deal has a wealth of other advice for exporters new to the Indian market, beginning with the cardinal

#### Think small

Small and medium-sized firms have a better chance of success than large ones in India, says Shah. "It's faster, and more affordable, to complete a small joint venture — and one small success will lead to another."

He takes his own small (\$2-million) Cubex joint venture as an example. With a solid presence now in India, Cubex Limited is poised to expand the municipal equipment side of its business. In fact, the company already has meetings set up in cities across India in May with potential customers — meetings, incidentally, arranged by the commercial officers at the CHC and Consulate.

#### Engaging in cycle

And so the story comes full circle, and the cycle continues. It's a cycle in which the Canadian government has officially re-engaged as of March 20 [see *CanadExport* Vol.19, No.7], and one that Shah applauds. "Re-engagement will encourage many Canadian companies that are looking to explore opportunities in India and many others that are already engaged."

And this engaging businessman knows that engagement is what it's all about.

For more information, contact Hemant Shah, CEO, Cubex India, tel.: (204) 694-5505, fax: (204) 633-0665, e-mail: [hirshah@mts.net](mailto:hirshah@mts.net) Web site: [www.cubex.net](http://www.cubex.net) ★

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