

Are We Listening?

Are we listening to our client -- the Canadian exporter -- about what Trade Commissioners can do to assist the export efforts of Canadian companies? In order to determine the perceived success of our mission, this memo examines a number of focus group reports, surveys of those who have used the Trade Commissioner service, and general perception surveys. These studies were commissioned by a variety of different organizations for varying purposes over the past three years, but all examine, in one manner or another, our mission, our performance, or our clients. A bibliographic list of these studies can be found on page 5 of this memo; copies of individual studies are available upon request.

Reference to survey material is indicated, for example, by (1, p.6), which refers to bibliographic item 1 (*Survey of Canadian Exporters*), page 6.

These eleven surveys reveal the following:

1. Generally, Trade Commissioners provide a valuable resource to Canadian exporters.

- Over 90 percent of firms questioned across Canada consider that assistance by Trade Officers has met or exceeded their expectations. (5, p. 5)
- Of Canadian exporters to the U.S.A., 97 percent said their Trade Officer was prepared, 91 percent said their Trade Officer was knowledgeable, 91 percent said the information provided was useful. (4, p. 2)
- Of Canadian companies of all sizes across Canada, 41 percent said the Trade Commissioner service was "very useful;" another 34 percent said the service was "fairly useful." Only 4 percent found the service "not at all useful." (1, p.15)
- 65 percent of companies across Canada said that they consider the Canadian trade offices abroad an important source of international market information. In the same survey, 75 percent consider a call upon Canadian trade offices abroad as a must when they are travelling on business. (5, pp.8&10)

2. However, among the general population there is a feeling that "the government" could do more to help Canada compete internationally.

- Although Canadians surveyed accept that the only way to preserve our standard of living is through trading competitively in the global marketplace, 87 percent believe that Canada is falling behind its international competitors and not competing as well as it should. (2, pp. 1&14)
- Only 43 percent believe the federal government is committed to making Canada more competitive. (2, p.16)
- Only 37 percent believe that the federal government has an overall plan for international trade. (3, p. 3)