

easily run a credit check on your firm. So, first impressions are especially important.

- If you have a small company and your business involves frequent, long periods of travelling, you should establish a system for responding to overseas enquiries during your absence. A simple letter from your secretary acknowledging the communication and stating your probable date of return will keep the overseas importer from wondering whether or not you are still in business.
- Finally, a small, but frequently overlooked detail. Make sure to airmail your letters and use adequate postage. Do not assume your secretary knows this — check it out. If there is not sufficient postage on your letter, the post office will send it Via Sea and it could take up to three months to arrive!

## Communicating by Telex and Cable

Frequently, the urgency of a piece of information or a business transaction will dictate the use of telex or cable. In using international telex/cable messages, you should pay particular attention to the following details:

- Resist the temptation of using abbreviations, “telegraphic” sentences and “bare bones” messages to save a few cents. The person receiving your cable in the telegraph office may not know the language and the result could be an embarrassing, garbled message, lost business and time. State your message in simple, standard language that conveys the intended communication.
- Be sure to include your complete cable/telex address for reply and state clearly how you want the response sent.
- Always mail copies of all telex and cable communications that you send. This will confirm the text of the cable and will serve as a reminder for the action to be taken.

## Telephone Communications

International telephone calls are a standard tool-of-the-trade for the exporter. Unfortunately, all too often, calling overseas is frustrating. The problem of time differences, busy circuits, bad lines, different holidays and holy days and equipment breakdown — all seem to conspire against the exporter who is trying to get an urgent message overseas. While there is nothing one can do to overcome these problems, international telephone calls can be made easier if you keep the following tips in mind:

- In calling overseas, you will frequently be speaking with persons who are not native speakers of your language. As well, differences of accent, intonation and word usage will often make messages incoherent. You can alleviate this problem by speaking in a clear, distinct manner and using only the standard, accepted form of the language. Avoid colloquialisms or expressions that are peculiar to a particular culture or country. A useful tip to remember is to take your language cues from the party you are calling. You can usually judge a person’s proficiency in a language within the first minutes of a call and can adjust your communication accordingly.
- Have clear, detailed notes on hand of topics you wish to discuss and make a note of outcomes or arrangements you have agreed to. Toward the end of your conversation, you should confirm what you understand the agreement to be.
- Follow up all telephone calls with a letter confirming details of the conversation. The letter can also be useful for providing additional information, if necessary. As well, it will serve to remind your overseas contact of any tasks to be performed.