

FOREIGN VISIT

If you have decided that your company has the resources to do its own marketing, the next step is to visit the target market or markets. To maximize the benefits of a foreign visit, carefully plan every phase in advance. The Canadian trade commissioner can provide invaluable service in this area. Your product's competitive features, the anticipated export price and promotional literature should be forwarded to the trade commissioner well in advance of the proposed visit.

Give the trade commissioner time to put together properly a list of suggested contacts and agents and distributors. Discuss the suggested contacts with Canadian exporters who are familiar with the market to obtain their views. Contact the Export Development Corporation to see if it has had any previous experience with the potential clients, and request a Dun & Bradstreet report. Once you are satisfied that the contacts are reputable, set up the appointments. Allow plenty of time between appointments and do not hurry to see your customers right after landing in the country. It is important to be well rested and fresh when talking to prospective clients. Travel and hotel reservations should be confirmed before leaving Canada. Determine if you require a visa along with your passport to enter the country. It is wise to take a few extra copies of your photograph for visa purposes in the event you wish to visit a neighbouring country. In addition, take business cards, company letterhead, samples of the products (if feasible), descriptive brochures, pamphlets and photographs of the products and a pocket dictaphone for recording notes as you travel.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

1. Rank countries in order of preference according to your detailed analysis of the top four or five markets.
2. Set marketing objectives to facilitate resource allocation, promote interdepartmental co-operation and measure performance. Develop strategies to obtain the chosen objectives.
3. It is important to put the strategic plan in writing to ensure complete corporate understanding and support. Written strategy also encourages goal-oriented behaviour, can be a reference guide for employees and serves as a means of evaluating strategy and implementation.

The export marketing plan should include the following elements:

1. Management survey
2. Analysis of target market(s)
 - buyer
 - competition
 - channels
 - technology
 - government
3. Review of company and product
 - past performance
 - resources — financial, production and human
 - organization structure — incentives, authority, responsibility
 - domestic marketing program: product, price, promotion, distribution
4. Problems and opportunities in target markets
 - strategies for each of these, for example, a company may be more successful in penetrating a market on a joint venture, licensing agreement or equity investment
5. Export market program
 - product strategy
 - price
 - promotion
 - distribution
 - research
6. Financial implications of exporting
 - projected revenues
 - projected expenses
 - financing needs
 - sources of financing
7. Program implementation
 - who will do what, when, where
 - staff recruiting, training, controlling and compensating
8. Program evaluation
 - information flow for ongoing feedback
9. Contingency plans