

FOREWORD

Like so many other bright ideas in the Trade Commissioner Service, this guide had its beginnings in a gathering of friends and a heated discussion about how our jobs have been changing over the years.

We spoke of the impacts of fax machines, increased travel, word processors and global communications; the growing number of demands on our time, from both the private and the public sector; the proverbial "doing more with less" syndrome, and the controversy, not to mention the impact, of saying NO to excessive demands; the apparent lack of strategic direction to Trade Commissioners in the field, and so on.

With one foot in the private sector and one in the public sector, Trade Commissioners are acutely aware of the maxim in business, "Adapt or Perish". While there is no doubt a clear need for rethinking the overall role of the Trade Commissioner, and the systemic issues of why, how and for whom the federal government should be providing trade development and trade policy assistance, we do not pretend to address these systemic issues here. If, however, our questions provoke discussion in the Department on the larger issues of trade development policy, then we will have achieved one of our major objectives.

Our more immediate objective was one of nuts-and-bolts concern: how can we, a group of Trade Commissioners who have been, or soon will be, responsible for trade programs abroad, pool our talents to offer the best of our collective experience and advice to one another? How can we, in this age of reduced resources, reduced career time abroad, and seemingly endless work demands, manage our trade programs abroad to best effect? We can no longer expect a legendary Super Trade Commissioner to be all things to all people, but we know we can expect managers to work smarter, to achieve the most "value-added" results for Canadian business.

If this project is to succeed, it will depend on your input and participation in the on-going discussion we hope will be generated. We welcome any and all comments that might assist future Trade Commissioner generations to improve this product; this guide can only improve with the collected wisdom of all of us, especially those of us currently in the field.

Our guide was put together on a shoestring budget, with more evening and weekend hours than we care to count . . . but more importantly, with the guidance and assistance of so many Trade Commissioners (and a few managers of other persuasions!) that we cannot thank them all individually. We would also like to thank the many "judges" or mentors who looked at this guide in its various early stages, and shared with us their words of wisdom and experience. Knowing that so many people in the Department supported and contributed to this effort made it all that much more worthwhile an undertaking.

From us to you, Trade Commissioner colleagues, with the hope that you will find this guide useful before and during your next posting.