

## Executive Summary

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### Background

In support of its mandate to help strengthen Canada's position as an exporting nation, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade produces and distributes publications to businesses involved in or considering export activities. These publications (more than 2,000 titles) are distributed by mail and through an interactive facsimile service known as FaxLink. To assess the effectiveness of 12 of these publications, the Department commissioned a survey of intended recipients.

The specific objectives of the research were to:

- evaluate the effectiveness of distribution and service delivery;
- determine the impact of the documents on users' export activities;
- describe readership behaviour and use of the documents;
- determine the extent to which the publications meet the needs of recipients;
- assess recipients' willingness to pay for the documents.

The study, which consisted of a telephone survey of 765 intended recipients, was conducted during March, 1995. The scope of the research was limited to non-governmental users of publications.

### Overall Impact and Utility

Departmental publications have a significant impact on the activities of those current and potential exporters that use them. **In 36% of instances where departmental publications were used, respondents said they generated new export sales as a direct result.** This figure increases to 40% for publications focusing on contact lists. Furthermore, Departmental publications appear to be contributing to new export activity. Based on the responses from those companies with no export sales in the previous year, use of Departmental publications generated new export sales 10% of the time. In addition, use of the publications caused non-exporting firms to undertake new activities or prepare for export in 22% of the cases. As shown in the graph on the following page, respondents also indicated that the publications were highly successful in helping them identify contacts for export market development, undertake new activities or prepare for export, and identify suppliers of goods and services purchased by their organization.

Departmental publications were also rated highly in terms of their utility as information tools. Segmentation analysis showed that small businesses (i.e. less than 100 employees) found the documents to be more useful than larger businesses. In addition, respondents tended to rate overall utility higher for those publications that focused on providing lists or directories than those publications which focused on background information and market analysis.