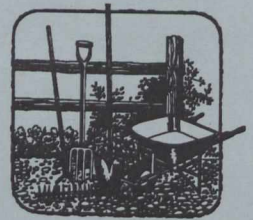


# Tools of the Trade

By Ezio DiEmanuele



Selecting the “right combination of tools” is fundamental in our efforts to better serve our clients. This refers to targeting the sectors we are working in and addressing the market conditions our clients face. The following is a summary of the “tools” we selected working in the agriculture and fisheries sector in one of the world’s most sophisticated markets: Japan.

First, we charted our short-to-medium objectives which included: providing timely MI/I, focusing our promotion efforts on the food service sector and on regional markets, targeting value added products, developing new clients and building strategic alliances with associations, emphasizing market development with established exporters, their importers and distributors, and stressing market access issues. We developed an overall theme for our promotional program to give each promotion a “corporate identity”. The theme also helped to raise our profile in the Japanese market.

As our clientele consisted of primarily SMEs, we chose to emphasize the food service sector because of its low market entry costs. This focus dictated our choice of promotional tools and food festivals became the work horse of our program. They are particularly attractive because they are a “win-win” promotion – for the restaurant involved they mean additional business, for the participating Canadian suppliers they are a cost-effective way to introduce and test market new products, and for us, they help to increase awareness of Canada’s supply capability.

A major contributor to the success of the food festival program was the work done in menu development. In the food service sector, the chef is key. Chefs must know the ingredients they are working with and how best to prepare them. We invited Canadian chefs to assist their Japanese counterparts to develop the menus used in the festivals. To further their knowledge about our food products, we invited Japanese chefs to visit culinary institutes in Canada. In cooperation with

the All Japan Cooks Association, we initiated the “Canadian Culinary Competition”. Each year teams of chefs from all over Japan competed to prepare prize-winning dishes.

Incoming missions were integral to our success. Instead of inviting a cross section of buyers to visit Canada, we found it more effective to invite importers and their customers. In one case, we invited an importer for six superchain stores to tour Canada together with a representative from each store. This permitted them to discuss their needs on the spot.

Trade shows were also vital. As an alternative to introducing new products through established trade fairs, we focussed on solos shows and product/company specific demonstrations. They allowed us to target key buyers and influencers. We got more “bang for our buck” using this approach.

Exposure in the trade press was critical to establishing and maintaining a presence in the marketplace. In order to ensure maximum coverage, every event included a press conference. We could not have bought the resulting press exposure we received. The coverage “turned heads” and helped to spawn further enquiries.

Our primary market information vehicle was a “no frills” quarterly newsletter which was a distillation of trade journal, newspaper, and magazine articles as well as summaries of discussions with Japanese clients. The newsletter, a 6-7 page bullet-form piece, was faxed to some 90 clients across Canada.

The above is a quick snapshot of the tools or approaches we used. I would be more than pleased to provide details or answer any questions. Please contact me by telephone at 445-0000 or via e-mail.

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