

Once a list of potential candidates has been developed, the next step is personal contact. The exporter's representatives should visit Mexico to meet with these candidates. The most important objective of such a trip is to gain an understanding of the ability of the representative or distributor to promote the product effectively, as well as to get a sense of its general market potential. Some of the questions to ask include:

- What is the candidate's previous track record? How many companies and/or products have been successfully represented or marketed?
- What facilities (e.g. for storage or display) do they have available in the target market? This is only relevant in the case of a distributor. An agent will not store a product.
- What is the agent or distributor's financial position?
- What kind of regional and industry coverage can the candidate provide?
- What marketing and promotional programs does the company currently have in place?
- Who are their current customers?
- What lines do they currently carry?
- Do they provide after-sales service?
- What about terms and conditions of sale and payment?

In picking an agent or distributor, look for someone with complementary capabilities. For example, a Canadian manufacturer contemplating exporting machinery to Mexico should be looking for an agent with experience in sales, marketing or distribution to the specific industry that buys such equipment.

Use the worksheet (see opposite) to guide you in what to look for while selecting an agent, representative or distributor in the Mexican market. Consider as many different candidates as possible, and measure them against the general questions in this worksheet.

Several firms should be interviewed and references always must be checked. The Canadian firm can also protect itself by entering into a limited-term trial agreement. If the foreign intermediary does not meet expectations, the company can look for an alternative after the trial period is over.