

distributor should match this amount and should supply proof of having spent the money on advertising before you pay your share. Generally, it is also a good idea to give your agent only the basic design and copy of the advertisement. The local translation is best left to the agent, who will be able to ascertain that all the correct nuances and interpretations have been captured in the translation.

## Communicating Overseas

At first glance, communicating business information overseas may not appear to differ greatly from domestic communications. There are, however, several features unique to international business communication that warrant highlighting.

For an exporter, overseas communications mean more than merely transmitting or receiving information. They are an important part of the total promotion campaign abroad and can do much to facilitate the entry of a company and its product into a foreign market. It is therefore important for the exporter to learn the accepted practices of international business communications and some of the pitfalls to avoid.

## Writing Letters Overseas

Despite the coming of age of telecommunications, letters continue to be the main mode of overseas communications. In domestic correspondence, the businessman operates on familiar ground. He knows the business experiences, background, practices and procedures of his correspondent. He also speaks the same language. When exporting, however, the situation is completely reversed. The exporter frequently must communicate without this advantage of shared experience. He must bridge not only differences in the manner in which business is conducted, but also cultural and language barriers. Obviously, international business correspondence makes special demands of the businessman. Here are some of its unique features:

- Before you write a business letter overseas, look at your letterhead. It should provide all the necessary information: your company's name, address, tele-

phone number, cable address, telex number and, most importantly, *country*. Many letterheads do not contain the name of the country. A letter headed "Yellowknife, N.W.T." may mean nothing to a buyer in Nepal, unless the word "Canada" is also on the letterhead. Or your company may use a letterhead that lists the addresses of all its offices in Canada. Unless it is clear which office the letter is from, your reply may well go through several offices before reaching you. If your domestic letterhead is not suitable for the export side of your business, you should consider investing in a separate letterhead for export correspondence. Remember to use airmail-weight paper with airmail envelopes.

- In your international correspondence you should try, as far as possible, to use the language of the country you are writing to. This is "*de rigueur*" if the language is one that is widely used in international business (English, French, Spanish) and it is, by far, the most satisfactory solution. Obviously, this will be feasible only if you have access to translation services. If not, you could contact the trade representative in Canada for that country and ask what the international business language of the country is. In any event, in your foreign communications you should raise and settle the question of language early in your contact.
- In overseas correspondence, pay particular attention to the form and tone of your letter. Ensure that it conforms to accepted practices of the country. In export, much of your correspondence may be to businessmen who are not native speakers of the language of your letter. You should, therefore, endeavour to write in a style that is simple and clear. Use standard expressions. Avoid slang or colloquialisms that may be misunderstood or perceived as excessively familiar and lacking in courtesy. Always sign your letters personally. When you initiate correspondence overseas, your letter should project an image of a well managed, reliable business. It should look professional and should establish your credibility as an exporter. The foreign businessman does not have ready access to information about your company and its history. He cannot