

## SUPPORTING THE MEXICAN PARTNER

The essential element of a geographical information systems (GIS) partnership is that the Canadian partner provides technology and know-how while the Mexican partner contributes contacts, market access and local value-added. In the current economic environment, this means a substantial commitment on the part of the Canadian partner.

For example, an American supplier called ERSI, which supplies ARC-INFO to *Sistemas de Información Geográfica (SIGSA)*, has agreed to honour all of *SIGSA*'s peso-denominated project quotes at the pre-devaluation rate. While this amounts to a revenue reduction of more than one-third for ARC-INFO, it will solidify a long-term relationship.

Mexican partners also require training and technological support. The Canadian partner can provide additional support by converting sales materials to Spanish and adapting products to Mexican needs.

Clearly, this kind of commitment costs money and requires frequent visits to Mexico. The key to managing these financial risks is to focus on niche markets where the Canadian company has a strong, long-term probability of success.

## TRADE SHOWS

Attending trade shows is a traditional method of introducing products to Mexico and establishing contacts with both potential customers and partners. There are few Mexican geographical information systems (GIS) trade shows. Decision makers generally attend shows in the United States or Canada. One show was held in Mexico City in July, 1995, sponsored by the *Asociación Mexicana en Sistemas de Información Geográfica y Estadística (AMESIEG)*.

Two other annual events are of interest. The International Conference on Remote Sensing is usually held in December. The Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA) holds an annual conference in the United States, usually in July.

## LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

Entering the Mexican market has always been a medium- to long-term proposition. The recent economic crisis has made this strategy essential, especially in the geographical information systems (GIS) subsector. Product sales will be slow, but the next year or two will be an excellent time to sell new concepts. The change of government will delay sales, but it presents an opportunity for Canadian suppliers to get through to new decision makers. The creation of upgradable products will also provide a long-run growth opportunity.