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**Department of Foreign Affairs and
International Trade**

*Qualitative Research on
the International Trade Business Plan
Final Report*

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International Trade**

*Qualitative Research on
the International Trade Business Plan
Final Report
January 24, 1994*

Dept. of External Affairs
Min. des Affaires extérieures

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	i
1.0 Background and Research Objectives.....	1
2.0 Approach and Profile of Participants.....	4
3.0 Client Needs and Segmentation.....	7
4.0 Sources Used and Positioning.....	15
5.0 Content, Layout and Format.....	24
6.0 Service Delivery.....	29
7.0 Conclusions and Recommended Strategies.....	30

Appendix A - Screener Questionnaire

Appendix B - Discussion Guide

Executive Summary

Background

The International Trade Business Plan is a document which consolidates the federal government's trade, investment and technology support activities in a single source. It was developed following consultations with business and industry groups, who identified a need for better coordination in delivering and communicating government services.

As it stands, the document covers a range of industry sectors, and targets a number of different audiences. To determine whether the Plan is meeting the needs of business clients, the Department of External Affairs and International Trade commissioned a qualitative research study. The research consisted of five focus groups with a cross-section of business executives. The discussions were conducted by the Phase 5 Consulting Group Inc. during the first week of October, 1993.

Information and Delivery Needs

The research showed that the needs of business clients differ on the basis of:

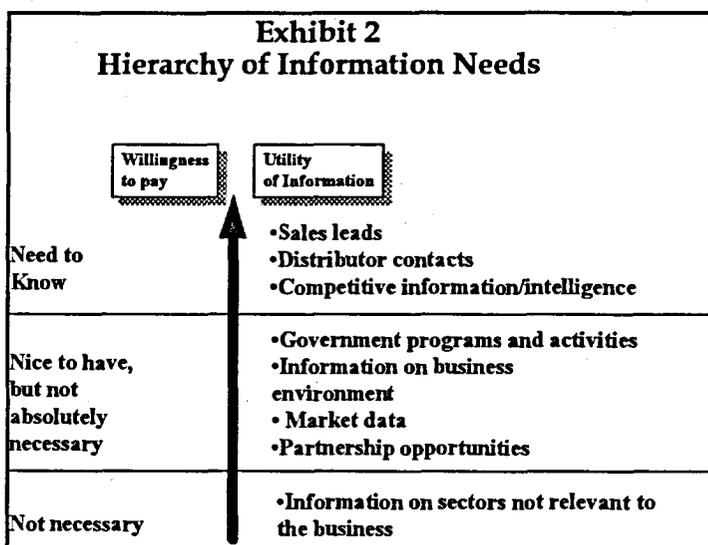
- **The stage they are at in entering international markets and their level of export activity.** As companies enter export markets, their information needs change from background data required to research markets and assess risk, to information required to generate sales.
- **The size of the business.** Large businesses often have access to international networks of subsidiaries or partners, and have more resources to gather information. Accordingly, they place less reliance on government to meet their information needs. On the other hand, small business people lack the internal resources to gather information and see a role for government as a source for commercial information.
- **The business sector and nature of business transactions.** Whereas

manufacturers require information to support product introductions (e.g. market size and potential, demographic statistics, orders), commercial service companies bid on "one-off" contracts and require bid-specific information.

- **The advocacy role of organizations** (i.e. commercial businesses versus associations). Associations are interested in government policies and plans which affect their sector, whereas businesses require sales and competitive information.

As shown in Exhibit 2, the information needs of business clients can be categorized as "need to know", "nice to have" and "not necessary". Business people are only willing to pay for information packages which contain "need to know" information.

Information which can be linked directly to sales or competitiveness such as sales leads, distributor contacts, and competitive intelligence is typically viewed as essential. Focus group participants also felt that information on the business environment (e.g. culture, business practices) is essential to know before entering a new market. While background market data and information on government programs is important, it does not have the same utility as sales and competitive information.



When considering the mechanisms used for delivering the information, clients were unanimous in stating that the information must be:

- current;
- accurate; and
- accessible.

The information delivery system must also be able to respond to situation and business-specific queries.

Positioning of Information Sources

When asked which source they prefer to obtain information required for international business development, all participants said that they prefer personal contact for a number of reasons:

- they can obtain intelligence which may not be accessible through hard copy or electronic sources;
- personal contacts can best react to situation-specific requests;
- the information is the most up-to-date; and
- the information is easily accessible "by picking up the phone".

Hard copy sources are only suitable for information that is not time-sensitive, such as general background information, and descriptions of government programs.

While electronic sources offer the potential to meet the needs of users for timely, business-specific information, some people cautioned that an electronic network must be properly designed and maintained to be useful.

Evaluation of the International Trade Business Plan

Very few focus group participants were aware of the International Trade Business Plan as a source of information on government plans and activities.

While participants understood the objective of the document as a means of communicating the government's plans in a single source, many felt that this objective was "politically motivated" rather than motivated by the needs of business users. They also felt that the document was best positioned as a "primer" for other government staff.

The information in the document was viewed as "too general" or "too broad" to address business-specific information needs. Most people felt that the activity list and Compendium contained the most useful information, but pointed out that the time-sensitivity of activities lends itself to other means of delivery.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Small business clients said that the government should encourage potential exporters and support those who are active in export markets by delivering information products and services that address their specific needs. This can be done by repackaging existing information or developing new services to address the following perceived gaps:

- **An export intelligence network** that links buyers and suppliers of goods and services, as well as provide competitive information gathered through Canada's embassies around the world.
- **A partner network** that lists Canadian companies interested in joint ventures in international markets.
- **A fax-back service** whereby business clients can request and receive business-specific information by facsimile.

- **Country briefings** which provide information on the customs and practices of doing business in target geographic markets.

- **"How to export" guides and seminars** to instruct potential exporters on the basic steps required to enter export markets.

1.0 Background and Research Objectives

1.1 Background

In 1992/93, the federal government consulted with all levels of society, as well as with private sector businesses and industry groups, to help shape the government's role in enhancing the international competitiveness of Canadian industry. The consultations a need by government to be more open, efficient, responsive and better coordinated.

One response to this challenge is the International Trade Business Plan, which consolidates government trade, investment and technology support activities in a single publication. On an annual basis, the publication is distributed via the WINEXPORT mailing list to exporters, potential exporters and persons and organizations with an interest in export, investment and technology policies.

As it stands, the publication is positioned broadly, with the information needs of several audiences in mind. The document covers a range of industry sectors with background information on each sector's domestic and international environment, as well as the government's sector-specific plan. To determine whether the document is meeting the needs of users (i.e. whether it is useful), the Department of External Affairs and International Trade (in cooperation with other participating departments) commissioned the Phase 5 Consulting Group Inc. to conduct a series of focus group discussion with business people in all regions of the country. This report represents the findings of those discussions.

1.2 Research Objectives

The main research objectives, as stated in the terms of reference were:

- to assess the opinions concerning the objectives and concept of the publication;
- to assess the current usefulness of the publication; and
- to determine the types of information which should be included in the publication in the future.

In addition to providing specific feedback on the publication, the study was used to provide the Department with strategic direction on the segmentation and needs of users with respect to the types of information in the publication, the positioning of the publication vis-à-vis these needs, the use of alternative sources of information (including personal contact), and the potential for positioning and new product development to best address these needs. Accordingly, the study incorporated the following objectives related to the strategic development of information products and services:

- to identify the information and delivery needs of different target audiences (**needs identification and market segmentation**);
- to identify the range of alternatives (competing or complimentary) currently used by each segment, the pattern of use, the rationale for their use, and their performance vis-à-vis the publication (**competitive differentiation**);
- to uncover potential information gaps or information needs for each segment that might be satisfied by the publication (**benefits selection**); and
- to develop a marketing strategy that includes recommendations with respect to target market selection, positioning, marketing mix (i.e. product revisions/development, distribution, pricing, communications), while considering the resource constraints of the Department (**marketing strategy development**).

The report is structured to address these objectives in sequential order, beginning with client needs and segmentation and ending with recommended strategies.

2.0 Approach and Profile of Participants

2.1 Overall Approach

Our overall approach involved five focus group discussions with business people in the following locations:

- Toronto (executives from large businesses);
- Montreal (executives from large businesses);
- Halifax (small business owner/operators);
- Calgary (small business owner/operators); and
- Vancouver (small business owner/operators).

The groups were conducted during the week of October 4, 1993.

2.2 Participant Selection and Recruitment

Participants for the focus groups were selected using a brief, screening questionnaire (Appendix A). The screening interviews ensured that we captured a range of views on the basis of:

- size of organization;
- industry sector; and
- level of international business activity (i.e. those with a high level of export activity vs. those with a low level of export activity).

The following tables profile the focus group participants by sector, and level of export activity.

Table 1
Profile of Focus Group Participants By Industry Sector

Sector	Vancouver	Calgary	Toronto	Montreal	Halifax	Total
Agri-food	1	1		1		3
Chemicals, Petro-chemicals & Pharmaceuticals		1		1		2
Environmental industries	2					2
Oil & gas field equipment		2				2
Resource equipment & technologies	1	1			1	3
Automotive	1					1
Consumer products	2	1	1	1	2	6
Electrical equipment			1		1	2
Information technologies				1	2	3
Medical & health care products				1	1	2
Commercial services		3	3	1	1	8
Fish and seafood	1					1
Construction & forest products		1	1	2	2	6
Mining			1			1
Urban transit & rail				1		1
Total	8	10	7	9	10	44

Table 2
Profile of Focus Group Participants By Level of Export Activity

Location	High Export Activity (50 % or more of sales)	Low Export Activity (under 50% of sales)
Vancouver	2	6
Calgary	1	9
Toronto	2	5
Montreal	2	7
Halifax	3	7
Total	10	34

All participants were sent a letter stating the purpose and objectives of the study. They were also asked to review the publication prior to the session.

2.3 Discussion Flow

The focus groups were conducted using a discussion guide (Appendix B) that covered the following topics:

- behaviour (i.e. the steps taken to prepare for international business);
- information and delivery needs (i.e. information required to prepare for and support international business activities);
- sources used and information gaps;
- positioning of the International Trade Business Plan;
- evaluation of the format and contents of the Plan; and
- role-playing exercise to identify potential strategies.

3.0 Client Behaviour, Needs and Segmentation

3.1 Client Behaviour and Segmentation

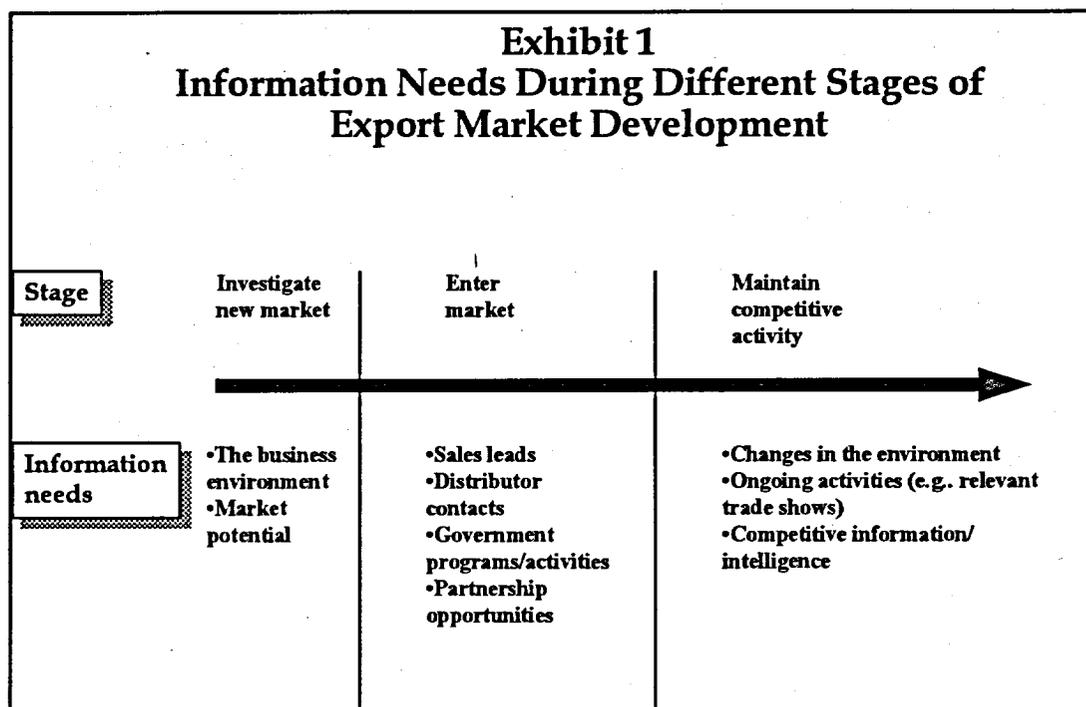
The research showed that the information needs of clients vary on the basis of:

- the stage they are at in entering international markets and their level of export activity;
- the size of the business and the associated level of risk from foreign market development or investment;
- the role in the organization (e.g. senior executives versus operational managers);
- the business sector and nature of business transactions; and
- the advocacy role of organizations (i.e. commercial businesses versus associations).

Stage of Export Market Development

Exhibit 1 shows that information needs may differ depending on the stage companies are at in developing export markets. In the first stage, businesses investigate the potential of a foreign market. This involves gathering information on the general business environment in target countries or regions. For product manufacturers, it may also involve gathering information on market potential (e.g. demographic statistics).

Once companies have assessed the market potential and general business environment, they seek specific information which helps them to enter new markets. For example, they may search for information on potential distributors, partnership opportunities, risk support activities (mostly the availability of letters of credit, export insurance) and, ultimately, sales leads.



As companies become established in a foreign market, they seek information which provides them with a competitive advantage (i.e. competitive intelligence). They also monitor any changes in the business environment which may impact on their business.

Size of Business and Risk of Investment

Small business owner/operators often do not have the time to conduct an in-depth analysis of foreign markets and, as such, respond to sales leads as they occur. On the other hand, large businesses may face a substantial investment in entering a new market. As a result, they spend more time assessing risk.

Large businesses may shun government assistance in gathering information for several reasons:

- Some executives expressed concern that responses to enquiries generated by them would also be shared with competitors.
- Some felt that government is not attuned to the commercial environment and, as such, they were skeptical about the government's role in providing "business" information. *"We need commercial rather than political information. It is very difficult to conceive of a government that would think*

the same way we do...they have a different perspective."

- Large businesses are more inclined to have the necessary resources and the network (e.g. foreign subsidiaries) to gather information. *"We have a broad network around the world of our own resources that we can rely on."*

On the other hand, small business people indicated that gathering information on foreign markets can be a significant challenge. The following comments reflect some of the hurdles faced by small business people:

- *"Large businesses can do the calling a lot easier than us because they have the departments that look after that sort of thing...whereas the small guys have two or three owners and they're all busy."*
- *"We're a small company and, when decisions are made, we move very quickly. But it's getting tougher and tougher (to gather information) now that we're getting into countries where they don't speak English. Sometimes they get frustrated and hang up. I don't get what I want and I have to speak to a lot of people."*

Unlike large businesses, small businesses do not have ready access to international networks of people and resources.

Role in the Organization

Senior executives, as well as small business owners, were sensitive to the amount of time required to access the information. Typically, business people in all of the group discussions mentioned that they "pick up the phone" when they want information, rather than spend time searching through documents or other sources.

Business Sector and Nature of Business Transactions

Information needs tend to be business-specific rather than generic to broad sectors. In particular, many small businesses occupy narrow market niches. Accordingly, broad, sectoral information is of general interest, but does not usually facilitate business development.

There is also a distinction between those companies engaged in manufacturing activities and those which offer commercial services. Participants from commercial service companies (e.g. consultants, engineers) tend to bid on "one-off" projects, and require project-specific information. The following comments demonstrate this:

- *"My business is more project-oriented. Instead of going in and trying to market a product on a regular basis, we're looking at projects from time to time. What we need is feedback from the field (from the embassies) to advise us on projects as they're coming up, and to advise us on what stage they're at."*
- *"Our function is to, first, find a project, win it, and then successfully execute it. If we develop a joint venture, it usually ends with the project."*

Whereas manufacturers often need to visit the export markets they are investigating (e.g. *"to understand the social attitudes of people and whether there's a market for our product"*), commercial service companies felt that, given their project-specific needs, the information can be gathered by telephone more cost-effectively.

- *"We can phone people on a regular basis and the bill is \$2,000 per month. That's one plane ticket."*

Advocacy Role

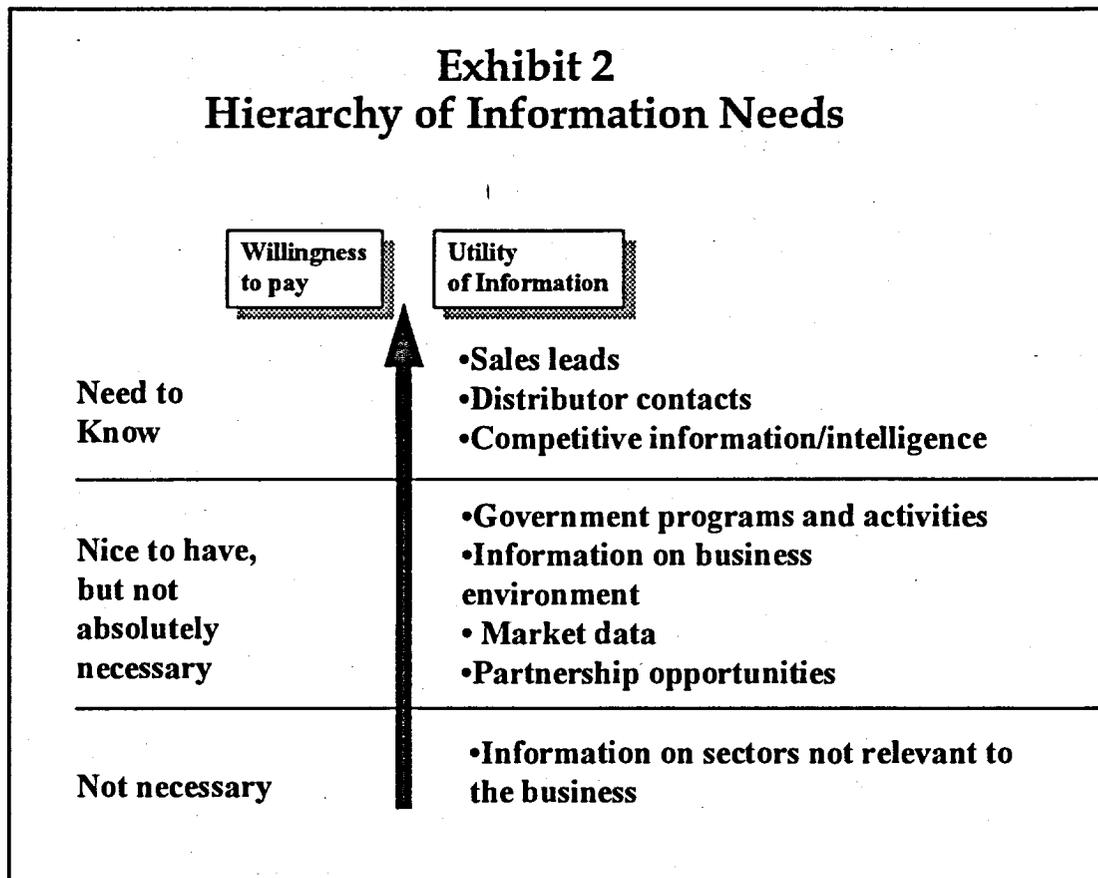
Businesses are interested in information which assists them with commercial objectives. Associations, however, perform an advocacy role and have a greater need for broad sectoral information related to government activities, policies and plans.

3.2 Information Needs

Prior to evaluating the publication, participants were asked to identify and prioritize their needs with respect to information to support their international business activities (i.e. both preparation and export market development).

One overriding theme was that the information must be specific to the needs of each particular business in order to be most useful. Broad sectoral information was of general interest, but did not address the higher order demand for information that can be used to generate sales for a particular business, product or service. The following comments reflect the experience of business people in accessing services that did not provide business-specific information:

- *"We were on a network (the World Trade Centre network) for two years and we found that there weren't opportunities for us. In the end, we dropped it because we didn't see the benefit to our particular business."*
- *"The OBS (Open Bidding Service)...I haven't found anything yet that I've bid on."*



"Need to Know" Information

Exhibit 2 prioritizes the information needs of business people on the basis of utility. The diagram shows that certain information is essential to doing business and can be categorized as "need to know". Business people were more receptive to paying for this information because it can be linked directly to sales. The following paragraphs describe the types of information which fall into this category.

Sales leads. Information on buyers looking for products (manufacturing), or organizations looking for tender bids on large projects (commercial services) was viewed as essential to international business development.

Distributor contacts. Information on potential distributors was also viewed as essential. Exporters need to know which distributors are interested in their particular product. As demonstrated by the following comment, they also need to assess the reliability of the distributor.

- *"You have to be careful when you're choosing a distributor. It doesn't cost much for them to get listed and some are just fishing."*

Competitive intelligence. Participants expressed a need for information on the activities of competitors in foreign markets. For large tenders, they were also interested in information on the position of competitors in the bidding process (e.g. Are they a favoured supplier? Are they receiving high level political support from their home government?).

Business environment. Information on the customs and practices of doing business in target geographic markets was viewed as essential to most exporters. This information is particularly important when first entering a new market.

- *"My needs are: How is business conducted in that country? What are the pitfalls? What are the things you need to know if you've never been into that area? What are the cultural differences?"*

On an ongoing basis, businesses also need to monitor the environment for changes which may impact on them.

"Nice to Have" Information

Participants expressed an interest in other information which, while not integral to making sales, played an important role in supporting business decisions. This information includes:

Government programs and activities. Participants were most interested in information on programs related to export risk (e.g. insurance services through Export Development Corporation). While there was interest in government export policies and plans as general interest information, clients felt that the information should be "tactical" in nature (i.e. the actions or steps the government is taking).

Necessary Steps to Take When Exporting. Small business participants also felt that companies which are new to exporting must know the steps to take in order to enter an export market (e.g. legal obligations/regulations, steps to take to avoid potential pitfalls).

Market data. People expressed a need for data which can be used to describe and quantify foreign markets, such as demographic information and demand for products and services.

Partnership opportunities. Participants mentioned that they cannot bid on some

large international projects without being part of a team of companies, each specializing in a certain aspect of the project. They felt that there is a need for information on potential partners in related businesses (i.e. a list of companies and contacts interested in teaming up with others on large bids).

3.3 Delivery Needs

When designing information products and services for business, it is important to understand the features which must be incorporated into delivery mechanisms, as well as the contents. Participants were unanimous in stating that the information must be:

- **Current.** *"I want to know before the Globe and Mail knows." "I want today's information today." "It has to be updated frequently."*
- **Accurate.** *"If it's not accurate, it can be worse than no information at all."*
- **Accessible.** *"It took me two months to find the information I needed...it's got to be much faster if we're going to be competitive in this world." "If it's an electronic system, it's got to be properly designed. I want to dial up the system, enter my password, there will maybe be three things on there to choose from...do you want to know about business leads, trade shows or whatever...and I only have to push one button and I can print out the latest updates."*

The need for timely, accurate information is driven by today's time-sensitive business environment. Most participants stated that they must act very quickly to take advantage of business opportunities. Timeliness is particularly important in the international business environment because of the number of companies competing and the ability of buyers to satisfy their needs quickly. Information which is out of date can lead to inefficient use of time or money.

In some cases, participants felt that the source needs to provide situation-specific information. By implication, the information source would have to be interactive, responding to questions as they are asked.

3.4 Preferred Format

When asked for their preferred format for accessing the information, participants were mixed in their responses.

Some people felt that, given the nature of the information they require (e.g. intelligence, current information), it would not be possible to provide this information through sources other than personal contact.

When given a choice between hard copy and electronic delivery formats, participants preferences differed depending on their level of comfort with technology.

People who were comfortable using on-line services preferred this format because of the ability to customize requests and to receive up-to-date information.

Senior executives or older people who felt they did not have the time or knowledge to use electronic services preferred traditional hard copy sources of information.

As a means of addressing the needs of those who are not comfortable with electronic sources, yet require the same timeliness of information, several people suggested a "fax-back" service.

- *"They should target us...otherwise we get shelves full of these things (the Plan). That's why a fax would be better...no bound publication, just a fax saying 'next quarter, these are the things that are happening in your sector. And if there are any new contacts to list, put them in. When we're finished reading it, we can throw it out."*

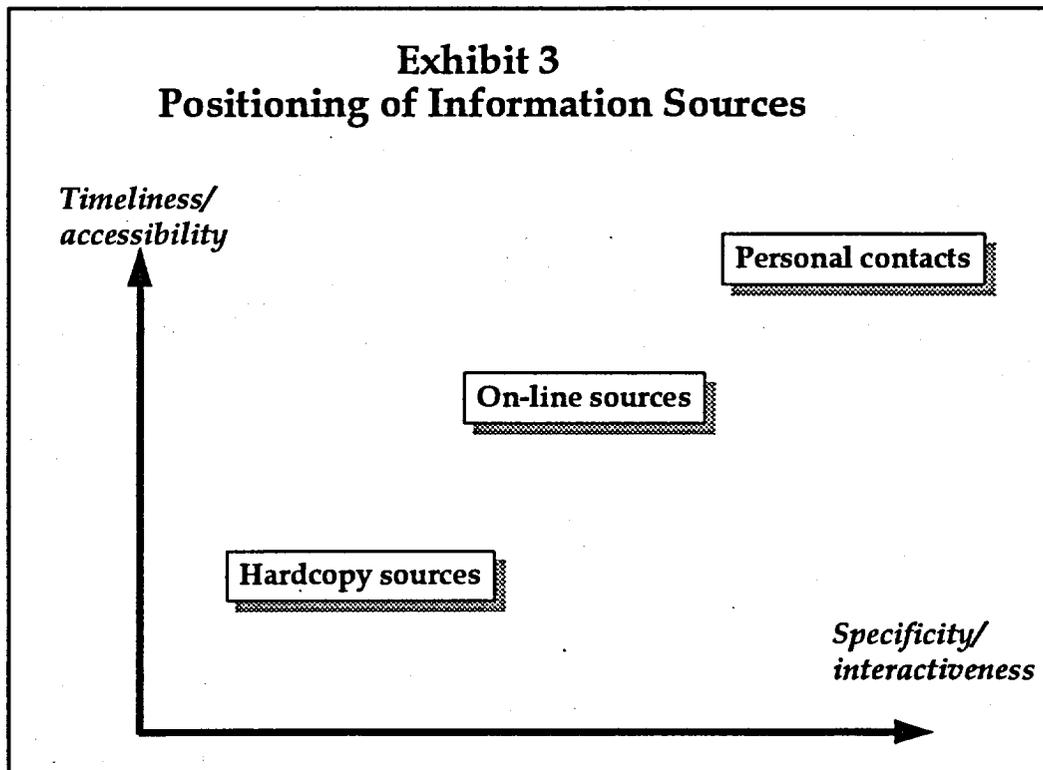
The facsimile was viewed as a means of forwarding *necessary* material in a timely manner, without inundating business people with paper publications. Again, this reflects the time sensitivity of clients and their desire for quick information products.

4.0 Sources Used and Positioning

Following a discussion of the information and delivery needs of clients, participants were asked to describe the sources they now use to obtain information, to evaluate the positioning and usefulness of these sources (including the International Trade Business Plan), and to identify any potential information or service gaps.

4.1 Sources Used and Positioning

To gather the information they need to prepare for international business, participants stated that they access a number of different sources. Exhibit 3 shows the main sources of information and their positioning relative to the needs of users.



Personal contacts. Personal contacts (i.e. usually by telephone) are by far the most frequently used source of information. These contacts include: commercial officers in embassies abroad, International Trade Centre representatives, sector experts in industry-specific government departments (e.g. mining, agriculture), and company representatives in foreign subsidiaries (for large companies).

During the discussion, participants mentioned that personal contacts meet their information and delivery needs for a number of reasons:

- Some people felt that personal contacts can provide information that could not be made available in hard copy or electronic format. For example, they could provide advice on doing business in a certain country which might be controversial if made available through public information services.
- Personal contacts can react more easily to specific questions and situations. *"...it will depend on your individual needs and specific requirements and you need people to intuitively react to the questions, or to become knowledgeable where they are being asked questions frequently."*
- The information obtained through personal contacts is the most up-to-date of any source. *"The information changes so frequently that it's not something that can be written down."*
- In general, information can be obtained quickly and easily from personal sources. Most participants expressed a preference for simply "picking up the phone" to get the information they need.

The research also showed that different personal contacts are used for different information.

- Business people felt that the **commercial officers¹** in Canadian embassies abroad were particularly helpful for their knowledge of a country's customs and associated business practices. *"They have the answers to the questions we don't know how to ask."*
- For some industries, sector-specific experts in government departments act as

¹ These officers are foreign nationals.

a valuable source of competitive information, both because of their knowledge of the business and because of their exposure to international customers, competitors, technologies and government initiatives.

- **Local government representatives** (e.g. ISC, Trade Centre Representatives), are valued as contacts for information government programs and activities, and as a point of referral for specific information from experts in other areas of government.

Personal contacts are well positioned to meet the information and delivery needs of users because they offer up-to-date information that responds to specific needs in an accessible manner.

Hard copy sources. Business people mentioned a number of publications as sources of information:

- Several people mentioned that they receive *Canada Export*, External Affairs and International Trade's newsletter for exporters. Most found the information on major contracts and opportunities to be useful, but felt that the time sensitivity of such information may not lend itself to this format. *"They listed some Hungarian contacts who were interested in forming relationships and buying stuff and we contacted one or two and they said 'That was a couple of years ago. We've already formed our relationships.'"* One participant also mentioned that the information is too broad to be of any use to his business.
- A couple of participants receive newsletters on business opportunities from the U.S. Department of Commerce.
- Business people obtain information on government programs through "handouts" (e.g. brochures, booklets). In general, they felt that this information is not as time sensitive (as sales leads) and, therefore, is suited to a hard copy format.

In general, participants felt that these hard copy sources lacked both the specificity and the currency to satisfy their need for sales and competitive information. They were viewed as suitable for information which is of "general interest" or which is not time-sensitive (e.g. government policies, plans and programs).

Electronic Sources. Relatively few people accessed electronic information services on a regular basis. Some had tried various services but had found that they either "did not produce results" or were "too difficult to access".

The use of electronic sources was particularly prevalent among participants in the Halifax group, who viewed themselves as leaders in the use of electronic information.

The services mentioned include:

- Participants mentioned that they receive orders by fax as a result of being listed on BOSS or with Canadian embassies abroad. For some, these fax orders were an important source of business. They also mentioned that faxes are received on a periodic basis from External Affairs and International Trade notifying them of upcoming trade shows and missions.
- A couple of people mentioned that they access the World Trade Centre network for business opportunities. However, they mentioned that this source had failed to generate sales for their business (because business-specific opportunities were not listed).
- Some commercial service companies also access tender information electronically through the World Bank.
- Several people mentioned that they were subscribers to the federal government's Open Bidding Service (OBS), but that the service had failed to generate opportunities which were relevant to their business.
- Some participants also mentioned that they had accessed services such as DIALOGUE which offer a broad range of information. However, they found these services to be difficult to access, with most eventually resorting to personal contacts for required information.

While electronic services are well positioned to serve the needs of business users, some people cautioned against services which:

- do not provide business-specific information;

- are not easy to access;
- are not kept up-to-date; and
- are expensive to maintain.

4.2 Positioning of the International Trade Business Plan

Participants were asked to give their overall perceptions of the International Trade Plan with respect to:

- their awareness of the Plan;
- their understanding of the objectives and intent of the Plan;
- their perceptions of the target audiences for the Plan; and
- the usefulness of the Plan in terms of meeting their information needs.

Level of Awareness

Very few people recalled receiving the International Trade Business Plan prior to the study. Of those who did recall receiving it, most stated that they glanced through it quickly or put it away for future reading.

Understanding of Objectives

Most people understood the primary objective of the document to be the provision of a broad overview of government policies and strategies for international business development assistance.

- *"I think the purpose of the Plan was to make us aware of government policies and strategies in a general way."*

- *"It's a good primer for what the government is doing or will be doing."*

Questions regarding the document's intent were raised in every session. Some people also felt that the document is "politically motivated" rather than motivated by the needs of businesses.

- *"It looks like the government is trying to convince itself that it has a mandate."*
- *"Did anyone get the impression that it's an attempt by the government to justify the work they're doing? When I was reading it, there were times when I really felt that."*

One participant thought that the "gap" between government and business objectives can mislead exporters if not made clear.

- *"The difficulty I have with government plans is that, in most cases, they're politically motivated. An exporter can be misled if there is a deal behind the scenes where the government targets a certain country for political, rather than business reasons."*

Perceptions of Target Audience

When asked who they thought the document was written for, participants in a number of different groups felt that it was best positioned as an internal primer for government employees who need to be brought up to speed on international business policies and plans.

Some people also felt that the document was targeted at manufacturing rather than service businesses.

- *"The chapter on commercial services covers 90 odd sectors and that's a problem. It's a goods only document. Maybe it could have a Part B to cover services."*

They went on to point out the growing importance and complexity of the service sector and the need for publications to reflect the diversity of service businesses.

Positioning and Utility of the Information

The type of information contained in the International Trade Business Plan was of general interest to participants. However, most viewed it as a document they would *"stick in my brief case and glance through it if I get a chance"*.

Most people suggested that the size of the document was "intimidating" and did not meet their need for quick information.

- *"They could have sent a letter and included a contact name and telephone number. It would have been a lot less expensive than this."*

In most cases, the sectors were too broadly defined to provide readers with the business-specific information they need.

- *"I guess it's trying to cover different areas...of course you have to pinpoint the area that applies to you. Generally, it's pretty broad. I bet no one here has even read through all this."*
- *"I read it but it's very, very general. It covers all the different sectors, many of which I have no interest in. It's provides a general policy spectrum. If a potential client from Timbuktu called me, I wouldn't go to this...it would be filed somewhere."*

As an annual publication, the International Trade Business Plan does not meet the needs of users for current information on activities.

- *"If you put out an annual publication, it will be out of date within three months."*

4.3 Information Gaps and Role of Government

In defining the role of government as a provider of information to assist Canadian exporters and potential exporters, the research showed that there is a divergence of views between small and large businesses. Whereas participants from large businesses questioned whether the government should play a role in providing commercial information, small businesses felt that there is a role for government in helping Canadian companies do business abroad. Again, these views were related to the relative resources available to different sized businesses.

Participants identified a number of potential opportunities (gaps) which could be pursued by government:

Export intelligence network. There was some interest expressed in developing a systematic means of harnessing the information gathering activities (competitive information, sales leads, contact names and numbers) of commercial officers and government sector experts. One participant raised the example of a system used by the Swedish government whereby foreign service officers are trained to gather information and convey it to a central location in their home country, where it is disseminated to relevant companies through sector-specific newsletters. Small business participants said that the information could be disseminated either by fax or through an electronic network.

Fax-back service. In recognition that the majority of small businesses are still not equipped with modems, participants suggested offering a fax-back service where interested business people could complete an information request form, fax it to a central location, and receive the required information back by fax.

➤ *"They could send out a letter with a very simple questionnaire and we could just tick off what we wanted. Then we could just fax it back and they could just send us the pertinent information that we need."*

Partner network. Several participants expressed an interest in contact information on other Canadian companies that may be interested in joint ventures to enter foreign markets. They felt that partner listings or solicitations could be made available through an electronic network.

Country briefings. A number of people mentioned that much of the information that they require on doing business in foreign countries is likely available in

departmental briefings and other material. However, some expressed doubt about the ability to publish sensitive material related to local customs and business practices.

"How to" export guides and seminars. For small businesses starting to export, participants suggested offering a quick-reference "how to" guide or brief seminars to outline the basic steps businesses must take before exporting their products or services to foreign markets.

For some, the delivery of information in electronic format represents the wave of the future. As such, they felt that there is a role for government to play as a leader in the delivery of electronic information. Although many business people are not equipped with modems (and some, computers), they said that the government can lead the way in the transition to electronic exchange of business information.

Other clients expressed their reservations about the ability of an electronic information system to capture the necessary intelligence and to provide specific answers to enquiries. They were also concerned about the resources required to maintain such as system.

- *"My fear would be that the government would spend too much time organizing the system and inputting data, and not be available for their customers. I'd just as soon talk to people who are reading the material."*

5.0 Evaluation of Contents, Layout & Format

Participants were asked to review the International Trade Business Plan prior to the sessions. Due to the length of the document and the time available, the discussion focused on overall impressions of each section, rather than a line by line evaluation.

5.1 Contents

Overall, participants found the document to be useful as a means of communicating the government's plan for international business development assistance. However, specific comments suggest that the content could be augmented and the information better presented to target the specific needs of business users.

Title

Several participants stated that the title "Business Plan" implied specific goals, objectives and actions "*with numbers attached*". Accordingly, they did not feel that the title of the document matched its contents.

Some people also felt that the title should "*tell me who's Plan it is*". They suggested that the title include the words "Government Plan" to better reflect the contents.

One participant also said that he preferred the word "export" to "international trade" as a means of capturing his attention.

Cover Page

Several people said that the cover page should indicate that it is a government document (e.g. by including the Government of Canada logo).

One participant mentioned that, when he first received the document, he was not aware from glancing at it that it contained specific information on government-sponsored activities relevant to his business. He suggested listing the contents on the cover page (e.g. "Inside"), much like the format used by periodicals.

Table of Contents

Most people liked the structure of the document (i.e. the division by sector). However, some mentioned that it was difficult to situate their particular business under the sector categories provided. They suggested that the document list the types of businesses which fall under each sector so they could more easily locate the information that is relevant to them.

Minister's Message

Most people felt that the Minister's letter was well-written, and "expected it to be there".

Preface

One person commented that the statement, "we will eliminate activities that don't generate sufficient interest" showed that the government was being responsible.

Another participant found this section to be useful in instructing him on how to obtain more detailed information. He felt that this was important to emphasize because *"the government gives us a plan, but we have to be proactive in getting the information and getting the government agencies we need involved."*

Glossary

All participants said that this section was useful.

Strategic Overview

Most people found this section to be useful as an overview of the government's plan. Some suggested that this could be sent out as a stand-alone document, with a contact list included (i.e. contacts by sector, telephone and fax numbers) for those interested in sector-specific information.

- *"I think the Strategic Overview is useful because it tells you which direction the government is going in. As far as the rest of it goes, it's not very necessary. I would be happy to send out the Strategic Overview with the index attached. If you're interested in any of the sections, call or fax this number and they'll send it to you."*

To some participants, the information in the Strategic Overview provided a good overall synthesis, but did not *"say how the government would proceed"*.

Sector Strategies

The sections on "International Environment" and "Domestic Position" were of general interest to readers but, for the most part, did not tell them "anything new".

- *"It is basically information that we already know."*
- *"You should know this stuff. There are other publications that provide this type of information."*

However, one participant viewed these sections as a means of determining *"what Ottawa is thinking about my sector."* He welcomed the opportunity to react to the document to ensure the government was *"on the right track"* with respect to his sector.

Several people mentioned that the background information could become dated quickly. For example, two people pointed out that the number of software firms quoted in the Information Technology chapter (4,000) was inaccurate.

- *"I know for a fact that there are more than 3,000 software companies in Quebec alone."*

As with the Strategic Overview section, a number of people felt that the sector strategies were too general. They suggested including specific actions.

- *"If it is to be addressed to companies, I would like to know how the government plans to help me."*
- *"It's very vague. It says they're 'developing opportunities', but how are they developing them?"*

Activity List

Many people said that the activity list for their sector contained the most useful information in the document. Some questioned, however, whether the Plan was the appropriate vehicle through which to communicate this information. They expressed concerns about the information being dated by the time they receive the document. Trade missions, shows and activities were thought to be too time sensitive for an annual publication.

- *"On page 109, it shows that in May 1993 there was a building and home improvement show in San Francisco. For me to find out in September about a show in May that could have been useful to my business...that's quite upsetting."*

Some people also suggested adding fax numbers to the contact list.

Compendium

Participants were also asked to review a Compendium document which provided more detailed information on the activities listed in the International Trade Business Plan. They found the information in the Compendium to be more useful than the

information in the International Trade Business Plan. As one participant described it,

- *"I've been trying to track down information on this show in Europe for three months now, and the information I need is listed in this book. It would have saved me a lot of time."*

Appendices

A couple of participants suggested adding contact telephone numbers for information on the business environment in different countries.

5.2 Language and Terminology

Most participants found the document to be very well written (in both French and English). The following comments reflect this:

- *"A francophone wrote this."*
- *"It was not written by a lawyer."*

5.3 Layout and Format

People found the document to be well-structured and easy to read, with each subsection flowing in a logical manner.

- *"From a readability point of view, it's quite good...wide margins, and the typeface is nicely laid out."*

A number of people suggested that the format could be changed from one book containing the strategies for all sectors to sector-specific newsletters or contact numbers that are updated on a more frequent basis.

- *"If you put all the sectors in, it would be a much thicker document. If we only knew where to get information on a particular segment specific to us. It would be better if we could phone in for the information."*

A couple of participants also expressed interest in a format which would allow them to identify business opportunities in other sectors.

6.0 Service Delivery

The majority of participants who had contacted embassies for assistance felt that the staff were both courteous and helpful.

Some people mentioned that the process of "tracking down the right person" in government offices can be difficult. They expressed frustration at the time required to call government offices in Ottawa, be transferred to other numbers, or encounter voice mail systems. This prompted a couple of people to suggest a system where they could fax requests to a central location (perhaps by sector) and receive an answer back by fax.

➤ *Personally, I don't like to call government because I don't like to talk to these machines (voice mail). I would like to see fax numbers beside there instead."*

One participant also felt that there is a need to develop training and recruiting policies to ensure government people have a commercial perspective when dealing with the private sector.

7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Key Conclusions

When measured against its original objectives, the International Trade Business Plan acts as a useful means of communicating the government's plan with respect to international business development. It also consolidates the government's trade, investment and technology assistance activities in a single document. In its current format, the International Trade Business Plan serves the needs of groups with an overall policy interest (e.g. policy analysts, government employees, associations, sectoral advisory groups). However, it does not address the primary needs of businesses for commercial information (e.g. sales leads, competitive information, information on the business environment). While most business people understood the need for government to communicate its overall plan, the research showed that there are other objectives (such as providing businesses with information that will help them become more competitive on the international market) which could be pursued using existing or new information products and services. In particular, small businesses feel there is a role for government in collecting and delivering information that will help them penetrate new markets.

One of the key challenges in delivering commercial information is to ensure that it meets the specific needs of end-users. On one hand, information categorized under broad sectors may be of marginal use to many businesses, particularly small niche players. On the other hand, it would be difficult to define sectors which adequately describe each business operation. The answer lies in designing a system (whether electronic or personal) that offers the flexibility to respond to business and situation-specific enquiries.

At the same time, it is clear that business clients do not wish the government to allocate more resources to the delivery of information. This implies using existing resources, products and services to better address client needs.

7.2 Recommended Strategies

Marketing Objectives

In defining the role of government, two objectives were raised during the sessions, each addressing different stages of international business development by companies:

1. to increase the incidence of companies which do business on an international scale; and
2. to assist business in competing through the provision of commercial information.

Target Market Selection

Given the resources available to larger companies, their perspective on government assistance and their higher level of activity in international markets, participants felt that small business clients should be a primary target of government for information products and services. They felt that specific attention should be given to business people who are considering exporting but are not yet active in international markets. Participants also suggested that information be developed to meet the needs of the service sector, as well as manufacturing.

Product/Service Development

Information product development strategies are required to address the specific needs of target clients. The following table summarizes the target client segments identified by the research, their information and delivery needs, and potential opportunities for product/service development.

Table 3
Product Development Opportunities

Target Clients	Information & Delivery Needs	Potential Product/Service Opportunities
Potential exporters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Steps to take to enter export markets - Information on business environment - Government assistance programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "How to" guide for exporting - "How to" seminars - Country briefings - 1-800 number - Fax-back service
Exporters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sales leads - Distributor contacts - Trade shows/activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Electronic network - Fax-back service
Policy stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government policies and plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Documents outlining policies/plans by sector

To the extent possible, existing government information products and services should be used to meet the needs of target clients. In some cases, it may simply be an issue of repackaging and communicating the availability of the information.

➤ *"Somewhere in the government files they have all the information. For example, they have all the pitfalls; they know the companies that have run into trouble."*

The activities list in the International Trade Business Plan and Compendium represents useful information to businesses that could potentially be repackaged with other commercial information. Similarly, the Strategic Overview section, combined with a list of contact numbers or a fax-back information form, could be used as an important communication tool to generate interest in business information among exporters and potential exporters.

Pricing

Participants indicated a willingness to pay for services which contain information such as sales leads, distributor contacts, and competitive intelligence. They stressed that an electronic service containing this information would also have to be "as easy to access as paper" before they would pay.

- *"They send out a form and you just tick off the right categories. Then they send you a letter back saying your number is '4829'. So when I go on the computer, I punch in 4829 and it brings up all your categories."*

They would not pay for a service that contains information on government programs and activities alone.

Promotion

While some people suggested that information products and services could be advertised in newspapers and trade journals, most participants felt that targeted direct mail campaigns would be most effective. They stressed that the direct mail campaigns must be more effective than existing efforts (i.e. many did not recall receiving the International Trade Business Plan or were not informed of relevant activities), and must include potential exporters who may not be listed on government exporter lists.

In addition to advertising and direct mail, some clients felt that government representatives *"should become better networked with industry groups"*.

Implementation

When implementing its information delivery strategy, the Department should consider the following:

- new product tests in areas of high usage (e.g. Halifax for electronic networks);
and

- simultaneous offering of fax and electronic networks to compare usage of the two systems.

Appendix A
Screening Questionnaire

External Affairs and International Trade

International Trade Business Plan

Screening Questionnaire

1. May I please speak with (contact name)?
- a) Person available - note name and go to introduction
Name: _____
- b) Person not available - set up callback time
Name: _____
Date: _____ Time: _____
- c) Person at another location - note name and number
Name: _____ Telephone: _____
- d) Refused - Thank and terminate

Introduction

Hello, my name is _____ and I'm calling on behalf of the Phase 5 Consulting Group, an independent consulting firm. We're conducting group discussions for the Department of External Affairs and International Trade. The Department would like to hear from business executives regarding the International Trade Business Plan, a publication which was recently sent to you. The purpose of these discussions is to determine ways in which the Department can improve the publication and assist Canadian companies by providing relevant information on government trade, investment and technology acquisition activities. Your input would be appreciated and will be used to help Canada's export sector. People who participate in the discussion group will be paid an honorarium of \$100 for their time.

2. Would you be willing to participate in a discussion group on _____
at _____ p.m.?
- Yes No - Thank and terminate

3. Are you or is any member of your household or your immediate family employed for a firm or organization operating in any of the following sectors:

			(ever)	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Market research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advertising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A government department or agency involved in export activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Terminate if yes to any

4. Have you ever participated in a focus group on the subject of exporting?

yes -----> **Thank and terminate**

no

5. Do you recall receiving the publication, International Trade Business Plan, which is produced by the Department of External Affairs and International Trade? **Note to interviewer:** Prompt, if necessary, that it has a white cover with green writing and lists government trade, investment and technology activities by industry sector.

yes

no

6. To what extent is your company involved in exporting products or services to foreign markets, including the United States? Are you planning to export?
- a lot (more than 50% of business activity)
 - some (less than 50% of business activity)
 - very little (less than 10% of business activity)
 - none, but considering export trade
 - do not plan to export -----> **Thank and terminate**
7. Are you responsible for some or all of your company's export trade activities?
- No -----> **Ask for person responsible**
 - Yes
8. Has your company ever participated in any government sponsored export activities or programs, including trade missions?
- Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
9. How many people are employed by your firm? (Note: If the person you are speaking to is employed in a small division of a larger firm, check off category 3 "more than 100 (large business)", do not classify them as being in a small or medium sized business.)
- under 30 (small business)
 - 30 to 100 (medium business)
 - more than 100 (large business)

10. What type of business are you in? (i.e. Which products and services do you sell?)
Check one category (the main line of business). Prompt if necessary. If category is not clear, specify under "other"

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Agri-food | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other
(specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Chemicals, Petrochemicals and Pharmaceuticals | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Environmental Industries | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Oil and gas field equipment | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Resource equipment and technologies | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Tourism and entertainment | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Advanced manufacturing | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Automotive | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Consumer products | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Electrical equipment | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Information technologies | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Medical and health care products | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Commercial services | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Aeronautics | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Biotechnology | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Defence products | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Fish and seafood | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Construction and forest products | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Space | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Urban transit and rail | | |

11. I wanted to verify that the discussion group will be held from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. on (date) at (location). We'll be serving a light lunch at the session.

Prior to the session, we'll be sending you a letter of confirmation along with a copy of the publication. Please take a few minutes to review the sections of the publication which are relevant to you and come prepared to discuss the usefulness of the information, as well as any suggestions for improving the provision of government trade information to your business. Please bring the publication with you to the group session, along with any comments you have. Again, you will be paid an honorarium of \$100 at the session.

Could you please tell me your title and address, including your fax number, so we can send you the information.

Name: _____

Title: _____

Company: _____

Address (include postal code): _____

Telephone: _____

Fax: _____

**Affaires extérieures et Commerce extérieur
Plan de promotion du commerce extérieur
Questionnaire de sélection**

1. Puis-je parler à (nom de la personne contactée)?
- a) La personne est disponible - notez le nom et passez à l'introduction
Nom : _____
- b) La personne n'est pas disponible - fixez une heure de rappel
Nom : _____
Date : _____ Heure : _____
- c) La personne se trouve à un autre endroit - notez le nom et le numéro
Nom : _____ N° de tél. : _____
- d) La personne oppose un refus - Remerciez et mettez un terme à la conversation

Introduction

Allo. Je m'appelle _____ et je vous téléphone au nom du **PHASE 5 CONSULTING GROUP**, une société d'experts-conseils indépendante. Nous organisons des discussions de groupe pour le ministère des Affaires extérieures et du Commerce extérieur. Le Ministère aimerait connaître les points de vue des dirigeants d'entreprise sur le Plan de promotion du commerce extérieur, publication qui vous a récemment été acheminée. Les discussions ont pour objet de déterminer comment le Ministère doit s'y prendre pour améliorer la publication et aider les entreprises canadiennes en leur fournissant des renseignements pertinents sur les activités du gouvernement en matière de commerce, d'investissement et d'acquisition d'outils technologiques. Vos commentaires seraient appréciés et aideraient le secteur des exportations du Canada. Les participants aux discussions de groupe recevront des honoraires de 100 \$.

2. Seriez-vous disposé(e) à participer à une discussion de groupe le _____ à _____?
- Oui Non - Remerciez et mettez fin à la conversation
3. Vous ou une autre personne de votre ménage ou de votre famille immédiate êtes à l'emploi d'une entreprise ou d'une organisation oeuvrant dans l'un des secteurs suivants :

(déjà)

	Oui	Non	Oui	Non
Étude de marché	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Publicité	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Un ministère ou une agence du gouvernement ayant des activités d'exportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Mettez fin à la conversation si la personne répond oui à l'une de ces questions

4. Avez-vous déjà fait partie d'un groupe cible sur l'exportation?

oui -----> Remerciez et mettez un terme à la conversation

non

5. Vous rappelez-vous avoir reçu la publication Plan de promotion du commerce extérieur, qui est publiée par le ministère des Affaires extérieures et du Commerce extérieur? Note à l'intervieweur : Ajoutez, au besoin, qu'il s'agit d'une publication à couverture blanche avec des inscriptions en vert qui donne la liste des activités du gouvernement en matière de commerce, d'investissement et d'outils technologiques par secteur d'activité économique.

oui

non

6. Dans quelle mesure votre entreprise est-elle touchée par l'exportation de produits et services sur les marchés étrangers, dont les États-Unis? Planifiez-vous des activités d'exportation?
- beaucoup (plus de 50 % des activités de l'entreprise)
 - assez (moins de 50 % des activités de l'entreprise)
 - très peu (moins de 10 % des activités de l'entreprise)
 - pas du tout, mais envisageons d'exporter
 - n'envisageons pas d'exporter -----> Remerciez et mettez un terme à la conversation
7. Êtes-vous responsable en tout ou en partie des activités d'exportation de votre entreprise?
- Non -----> Demandez la personne responsable
 - Oui
8. Votre entreprise a-t-elle déjà participé à des activités ou des programmes d'exportation parrainés par le gouvernement, dont des missions commerciales?
- Oui
 - Non
 - Ne sais pas
9. Combien d'employés votre entreprise compte-t-elle? (Note : Si la personne à qui vous parlez est employée d'une petite division d'une entreprise plus grande, cochez la catégorie 3 «plus de 100 employés (grosse entreprise)», et ne la classez pas dans une entreprise petite ou moyenne.)
- moins de 30 (petite entreprise)
 - de 30 à 100 (moyenne entreprise)
 - plus de 100 (grosse entreprise)

10. Dans quel genre d'entreprise travaillez-vous? (c'est-à-dire quels sont les produits et services que vous vendez?) Cochez une catégorie (principal secteur d'activité). Intervenez si nécessaire. Si la catégorie n'est pas claire, précisez sous «autre»

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Produits agroalimentaires | <input type="checkbox"/> | Autre
(précisez) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Produits chimiques, pétrochimiques et pharmaceutiques | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Industries de l'environnement | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Équipement d'exploitation pétrolière et gazière | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Technologies et matériel d'exploitation des ressources | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Tourisme et loisirs | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Équipements avancés de production | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Accessoires d'automobile | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Produits de consommation | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Équipement électrique | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Technologies de l'information | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Produits médicaux et de soins de santé | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Services commerciaux | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Aéronautique | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Biotechnologie | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Produits de défense | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Poisson et fruits de mer | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Matériaux de construction et produits forestiers | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Espace | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Transport urbain et transport ferroviaire | | |

11. Je tiens à vous préciser que la discussion de groupe aura lieu de midi à 14 h le (date) à (endroit). Nous vous servirons un léger repas au cours de la rencontre.

Avant la discussion, nous vous ferons tenir une lettre de confirmation ainsi qu'un exemplaire de la publication. Veuillez consacrer quelques minutes à l'examen des différentes sections de la publication qui vous concernent et vous préparer pour discuter de l'utilité de ces renseignements et nous donner des suggestions pour améliorer la communication par le gouvernement d'informations commerciales à votre entreprise. Veuillez apporter la publication ainsi que vos commentaires à la discussion de groupe. Je vous rappelle que vous recevrez des honoraires de 100 \$ pour votre participation.

Pourriez-vous me donner le titre de votre poste et votre adresse, ainsi que votre numéro de télécopieur, afin que nous puissions vous faire parvenir l'information.

Nom : _____

Titre : _____

Entreprise : _____

Adresse (avec le code postal) _____

Numéro de téléphone : _____

Numéro de télécopieur : _____

Appendix B
Discussion Guide

Focus Group Discussion Guide International Trade Business Plan

Introduction

As you are aware from our communication with you, the Phase 5 Consulting Group is conducting group discussions on behalf of the Government of Canada to obtain feedback on this publication (*the moderator will show the publication*), which is called the International Trade Business Plan. The publication outlines federal government activities which are designed to assist businesses in the areas of trade, investment and technology.

Check to ensure everyone has a copy of the publication.

The Government is very interested in supporting Canadian companies by providing them with information to help prepare for global competition. This meeting will be used to help better understand your needs.

Before we start, I wanted to emphasize a number of points:

- I am not a government employee and may not have all the information on government programs. I've been hired as an objective moderator in order to get your honest opinions on this publication. If you have any specific questions about government activities, I will put you in touch with someone after the session.
- The session is being audio taped to assist with reporting.
- People are viewing the session in an adjacent room. This is done to keep our clients out of the discussion.
- Results will only be reported in aggregate and no comments will be attributed to individuals.
- Some people will have more knowledge than others about government trade programs. However, I want to hear everyone's comments, no matter how frivolous you think they are.

- If your neighbour makes a comment and you want to build on it, please feel free to do so. I want this to be an open discussion.
- I want to emphasize that this consultation process is non-partisan in nature. As such, I would prefer to focus on the subject of your business information needs, rather than government policies.

Introduction

I'd like to start by understanding a little bit more about the organization you work for, your role in the organization, your duties related to international business development, and the extent to which your company competes on a global scale.

The moderator will go around the room asking people to introduce themselves.

Information Needs

Before I get your feedback on the publication, I'd like to start the discussion by understanding the information you need to prepare your company to do business internationally. This process requires you to step back and think about your information needs, regardless of whether the information is currently available.

What are the steps that you go through in planning to do business on an international scale?

Do you require different information at different stages?

When do you use information on government programs and activities? In which situations?

When you are preparing your company to compete through technology and investment, do you require certain information?

When you are first entering an export market, do you require certain information on government trade programs?

What is the nature of this information? Probe: Is it simply a list of available programs and contacts? What level of detail do you require?

Once you have established an export market, do you require different information on government programs and activities?

Delivery Needs and Preferred Format of the Information

What factors are important to you in accessing information? (e.g. ease of access, timeliness of information) Why?

What format should this information be in? Probe: A detailed publication? Sector-specific documents? Quick reference cards or information sheets?

Do you currently use a modem to access external information on your computer?

Which electronic sources do you use?

If so, would you be interested in a service through which you could access information on government trade, investment and technology programs and activities on-line? Why? Why not?

What features should the service offer? For example, should you be able to conduct a search by keyword? By sector?

Sources and Availability of Information

Where do you go to get information on government trade, investment and technology programs and activities?

Do you use different sources in different circumstances? Why?

Were you aware of the International Trade Plan prior to this study? Do you recall receiving it?

Do you use the International Trade Business Plan? In which situations? What for? If no, why not?

In your opinion, what is the overall purpose of the plan?

Is this purpose being fulfilled? Did the plan lead you to take any action? Did it help you in any way? How? What did you get out of this document?

If you don't use it, who might? Is it targeted at anyone in particular? Probe: Is it a government document written for government?

Does the publication provide you with the information you need on government programs and activities to support exporters?

Do the other sources? Why? Why not?

Is there any information that is not available through existing sources that should be made available? If so, what is the information?

Is adequate information available for your industry sector? If no, is this because your sector has been defined too broadly?

Is there a more effective way of delivering this information?

Contents of the International Trade Business Plan

I would like to turn to the contents of the publication itself.

Contents

Title:

Does the title communicate the right message? If not, how should it be changed?

Table of Contents:

Do you like the way the document is structured? Should it be divided by sector, or presented in some other way?

Minister's Message:

What message did this letter leave you with?

Preface and Glossary:

Did you find this information to be useful?

Would you present it any differently?

Strategic Overview:

Was the information in this section useful? Was it clearly written and understandable?

What changes, if any, would you make to this section?

Sector Strategies and Activities:

Did you find the background information in this section to be useful? Why? Why not?

What about the schedule of activities and contacts? Is this information useful? Did anyone participate as a result of seeing the document?

What changes, if any, would you make to these sections?

Appendices:

Did you find the information in the appendices to be useful? Why?

Would the plan be of use if the appendices weren't in it?

Overall Comments:

Which information or sections, if any, did you find most useful? Why?

What are the strengths of the document?

Would you continue to offer the publication in its current format? If no, what changes would you make?

Compendium:

Distribute compendium to participants and allow 2 to 3 minutes to review.

Would you find this document to be useful? Why? Why not?

How important is it that this information be current? Should it be available in electronic format?

Language

Was the document well-written? Probe for specific details (and translation issues in French session).

Layout and Appearance

Do you like the layout and appearance of the document? If not, what changes would you make? Probe: layout, use of colour, bolding, etc.

Format

Do you like the book format of the publication? Is there another format you would prefer? (Including electronic)

Support Service

How frequently should the information be updated?

Have you called any of the numbers listed? Did you get the information you needed? Have you contacted any embassies abroad for information or assistance? Were they helpful? Why? Why not?

Role-playing Exercise

I would like to spend the last half hour conducting an exercise that requires you to design a strategy for disseminating government export information to businesses.

Assume for a minute that you are employed by the Government and it is your responsibility to provide Canadian companies with the information they need on government trade, technology and investment activities and programs to help prepare for global competition. Think of it as if you were marketing a new product or service.

The moderator will list the following topics on the flip chart. If time is available, teams will be formed to discuss the strategies, followed by a group discussion of the findings?

- What would be the objectives of your marketing program?
- Who would you target?

- What types of information would you make available? Would there be different information for different users?
- How would you disseminate the information or make it available to businesses? Would there be different formats or means of distribution for different users?
- What partnerships would you pursue to help disseminate the information?
- How would you communicate the availability of the information? Communications message? Communications tools?

The moderator will thank the group and distribute the honorarium.

Guide de discussion

Plan de promotion du commerce extérieur

Introduction

Comme vous le savez, la firme Phase 5 Consulting réalise présentement des groupes de discussion pour le Gouvernement Canadien pour obtenir vos réactions sur ce document qui s'intitule le Plan de promotion du commerce extérieur. Cette publication présente les activités du gouvernement qui visent à aider les entreprises à développer le commerce, les investissements et la technologie.

Vérifier si tous les participants ont leur copie du document.

Le gouvernement est très intéressé à soutenir les entreprises canadiennes en leur fournissant des informations qui peuvent les aider à affronter la concurrence globale. Cette discussion va servir à mieux comprendre vos besoins.

Avant de commencer, j'aimerais souligner quelques points...

- Je ne suis pas un employé du gouvernement et je n'ai pas toute l'information sur les programmes gouvernementaux. J'ai été embauché à titre d'animateur objectif pour obtenir vos opinions honnêtes et sincères concernant cette publication. Si vous avez des questions spécifiques qui concernent les activités du gouvernement, je vous mettrai en contact avec des fonctionnaires du gouvernement à la fin de la discussion.
- La discussion est enregistrée pour m'aider à rédiger mon rapport par la suite;
- Il y a des gens qui vont observer la discussion derrière ce miroir unidirectionnel;
- Les résultats ne seront présentés au client que sous forme de commentaires regroupés, et aucune réponse ou commentaire ne sera attribué à un participant en particulier;
- Il va de soit que certaines personnes connaissent le programmes gouvernementaux plus que les autres, mais soyez assurés que nous désirons obtenir les commentaires de tout le monde...
- Si votre voisin fait un commentaire et que vous voulez y ajouter quelque chose, n'hésitez pas à le faire; Je veux que ce soit une discussion ouverte;
- Très important: je veux souligner que ce processus de consultation est parfaitement non-partisant. Donc, j'aimerais que nous parlions plus de du sujet de vos besoins en information, plutôt que des politiques du gouvernement.

Introduction

J'aimerais commencer par comprendre un peu plus quelle est l'organisation pour laquelle vous travaillez, le rôle que vous y jouez, et dans quelle mesure est-ce que votre entreprise est impliquée dans le commerce international.

L'animateur fait un tour de table et demande aux participants de se présenter.

Besoins en information

Avant d'obtenir vos réactions sur le document, j'aimerais commencer la discussion en comprenant vos besoins en information lorsque vous devez préparer votre compagnie à faire du commerce avec des pays étrangers. Donc il y a lieu, ici, de repenser à vos besoins en information, que ces informations soient disponibles ou pas.

Quelles sont les étapes que vous suivez quand vous préparez des activités commerciales internationales ?

Avez-vous besoin de différentes informations à différentes étapes de votre travail ?

Quand utilisez-vous des informations sur les activités gouvernement et ses programmes ? Dans quelles situations ?

Quand vous êtes en train de préparer votre compagnie à faire affaires en technologie ou en investissements, avez-vous besoin de certaines informations ?

Quand vous entrez dans un marché d'exportation, avez-vous besoin d'informations sur le programmes gouvernementaux sur le commerce ?

Quelle est la nature de cette information ? Sonder: Est-ce seulement une liste des programmes disponibles et de certains contacts ? De quel niveau de détail avez-vous besoin ?

Quand vous faites déjà affaires dans un marché d'exportation, avez-vous besoin d'autres types d'information sur les programmes ou activités du gouvernement ?

Besoins de distribution et format préféré

Quels sont les facteurs les plus importants dans votre démarche pour accéder à l'information ? (accessibilité, rapidité, info. à date, ...). Pourquoi ?

Sous quelle forme ou format devrait-on présenter cette information ? Sonder: Une publication détaillée ? Des documents reliés spécifiquement à une industrie ? Des genres de cartons d'information du style « Quick reference » ?

Utilisez-vous présentement un modem pour accéder à de l'information externe sur votre ordinateur ?

Quelles sources d'information électronique utilisez-vous ?

Si c'est le cas, seriez-vous intéressés dans un service « on-line » qui vous permettrait d'accéder à de l'information sur le commerce gouvernemental, sur les programmes reliés à la technologie et aux investissements ? Pourquoi ? Pourquoi pas ?

Qu'offrirait ce service ? Par exemple, devriez-vous être capable de faire une recherche à l'aide de mots-clé ? Par secteur ?

Sources et disponibilité de l'information

Où obtenez-vous des informations sur les programmes et activités gouvernementaux reliés au développement du commerce, aux investissements et à la technologie ?

Utilisez-vous différentes sources d'information selon les circonstances ? Pourquoi ?

Étiez-vous au courant du Plan de promotion du commerce extérieur avant de recevoir cette copie ? Vous souvenez-vous de l'avoir déjà reçu ?

Utilisez-vous ce Plan de promotion du commerce extérieur ? Dans quelles situations, et si non, pourquoi pas ?

A votre avis quel est le but derrière ce Plan ?

Ce but est-il atteint ? Ce Plan vous a-t-il amené à poser des gestes ? Vous a-t-il aidé de quelque façon que ce soit ? Comment ? Qu'avez-vous retiré de ce document ?

Si vous ne l'utilisez pas, qui pourrait s'en servir ? Est-il ciblé pour un type d'utilisateur en particulier ? Sonder: Est-ce un document du gouvernement écrit pour le gouvernement ?

Cette publication vous fournit-elle les informations nécessaires sur les activités ou programmes gouvernementaux reliés au commerce extérieur ?

Est-ce que les autres sources le font ? Pourquoi ? Pourquoi pas ?

Y a-t-il des informations qui ne sont pas disponibles via d'autres sources qui devrait être rendues disponibles ? Si c'est le cas, de quelles informations s'agit-il ?

Trouvez-vous qu'il y a assez d'information pertinente de disponible pour votre secteur ? Si non, est-ce parce que votre secteur est défini d'une façon trop large ?

Y a-t-il de meilleures façons de vous communiquer cette information ?

Contenu du Plan de promotion du commerce extérieur

J'aimerais maintenant parler du contenu de la publication.

Titre:

Le titre est-il évocateur du contenu de la publication ? Devrait-il être changé ? Par quoi ?

Table des matières:

Aimez-vous la façon dont le document est structuré ? Devrait-il être divisé par secteur d'activité ? D'une autre façon ?

Message du ministre:

Quelle impression avez-vous eue en lisant ce message ?

Préface et glossaire:

Avez-vous trouvé que cette information vous était utile ?

La présenteriez-vous de façon différente ?

Synthèse stratégique:

L'information contenue dans cette section était-elle utile ? Était-elle écrite de façon à ce que le lecteur comprenne clairement ?

Quels changements feriez-vous dans cette section ?

Stratégies et activités sectorielles:

Avez-vous trouvé que l'information contenue dans cette section était utile ? Pourquoi ? Pourquoi pas ?

Et que pensez-vous de la partie avec les activités et contacts à la fin de chaque section ? Cette information vous est-elle utile ? Pourquoi ? Pourquoi pas ? Quelqu'un s'en est-il servi ?

Feriez-vous des changements dans cette section ? Si oui, lesquels ?

Appendices:

Avez-vous trouvé que l'information contenue dans cette section était utile ? Pourquoi ? Pourquoi pas ?

Si ces appendices n'étaient pas incluses dans le document, serait-il aussi utiles ?

Commentaires généraux:

Quelles informations ou sections avez-vous trouvé les plus utiles ? Pourquoi ?

Quelles sont les forces de ce document ?

Continueriez-vous à offrir ce document dans son format actuel ? Si non, quels changements feriez-vous ?

Compendium:

L'animateur distribue le compendium et donne 2 à 3 minutes pour que les participants en prennent connaissance.

Trouvez-vous que ce document serait utile ? Pourquoi ? Pourquoi pas ?

Est-ce très important que l'information qui y est présentée soit à jour ? Devrait-elle être disponible sur support électronique ?

Langue

Le document est-il bien écrit ? Sonder pour plus de détails, notamment sur la qualité de la traduction.

Présentation et apparence

Aimez-vous la présentation du document, son apparence ? Si non, quels changements feriez-vous ? Sonder: utilisation de couleurs, de passages en gras, etc...

Format

Aimez-vous le format « livre » du document ? Auriez-vous préféré un autre format ? (Incluant l'électronique)

Service de support

A chaque combien de temps ce document devrait-il être mis à jour ?

Avez-vous appelé l'un des numéros listés dans ce document ? Avez-vous obtenu l'information désirée ? Avez-vous contacté des ambassades à l'extérieur du pays pour des informations ou de l'aide ? Ont-ils répondu à vos attentes ? Pourquoi ? Pourquoi pas ?

Jeu de rôles

J'aimerais prendre la dernière demie-heure pour faire un jeu de rôles qui ferait de vous des responsables d'une stratégie pour distribuer l'es informations nécessaires aux entreprises.

Faites comme si vous étiez un employé du gouvernement du Canada et qu'il est de votre responsabilité de fournir, aux entreprises qui en ont besoin, toutes les informations pertinentes sur le développement du commerce, des investissements et de la technologie, pour les aider à performer dans un marché global. Imaginez que vous êtes à implanter un nouveau produit ou service.

L'animateur écrit les sujets suivants sur le tableau à feuilles mobiles. Si le temps le permet, des équipes peuvent être formées pour discuter des stratégies, suivi d'une discussion de groupe sur les résultats.

- Quels seraient les objectifs du plan marketing ?
- Quels seraient vos clients-cible ?
- Quel genre d'information rendriez-vous disponible ? Y aurait-il différents types d'information pour différents types d'utilisateurs ?
- Comment distribuer l'information pour qu'elle soit disponible aux entreprises ? Y aurait-il différents formats ou moyens de distribuer l'information en fonction des différents utilisateurs ?
- Quels partenariats mettriez-vous sur pied pour distribuer cette information ?

- De quelle façon communiqueriez-vous la disponibilité de l'information ? Le message ?
Les supports de communication ?

Remerciements

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