

Business Trip Planning

A Team Canada Inc
On-line Guide for Exporters



Canada^{ca}

Note:

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However, it should be noted that the guide was ORIGINALLY designed for online use and that its format doesn't transfer particularly well to print format. Specifically, the guide refers readers to numerous Web resources which online readers can easily access by clicking on the links provided; on paper, these referrals appear as long Web addresses which make reading difficult. YOU SHOULD also NOTE THAT, due to space constraints, some long Web addresses in this document had to be divided into two or more lines; it should be noted that the complete addresses must be entered as one line in your Web browser. IF YOU WISH TO ACCESS THE WEB SITES LISTED, YOU WILL FIND IT MUCH EASIER TO USE THE ONLINE VERSION AND SIMPLY CLICK ON THE HOT LINKS.

To obtain further information on this guide's topic or on other Team Canada Inc guides, please visit ExportSource at exportsource.ca or contact us toll-free at 1-888-811-1119.

BUSINESS TRIP PLANNING

Task List

This tool will help small and medium-sized companies to:

- define their business travel objectives;
- explore sources of financial assistance for international business travel;
- make all preparations necessary for a successful trip;
- follow up on a business trip abroad.

Using this guide should help to make international business travel more cost-effective, productive and results oriented. It should reduce some of the uncertainties and help anticipate some of the risks associated with international business trips. Finally, it will help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make better use of the services of Canadian Trade Commissioners (www.infoexport.gc.ca/eservices-e.asp) in the field. If you don't have a specific country in mind for your business trip, the following websites may help you determine an appropriate international market to visit:

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade - Market Information

www.infoexport.gc.ca/main-e.asp?act=2

Industry Canada: Country Specific Market Research Reports

strategis.ic.gc.ca/sc_mrkti/ibinddc/engdoc/1a1.html

Canadian International Development Agency:
Country Profiles

w3.acdicida.gc.ca/cidaind.nsf/ad0eee9490b82b748525633e00539444?OpenView

Statistics Canada - Trade Data

www.statcan.ca/trade/scripts/trade_search.cgi

Travel Information & Advisory Reports

www.dfaitmaeci.gc.ca/graphics/cosmos/cntry_e.htm

The following are the most important tasks involved in preparing for an international business trip:

Task 1: Define objectives: what is it that you hope to achieve by travelling to the target country?

Task 2: Identify sources of financial assistance: there are several organizations that can provide financial support for your business travel abroad.

Task 3: Pre-travel consultations: there are many sources of expertise, information and advice that can help you plan your trip.

Task 4: Prepare for trip: this step-by-step guide can help ensure that you do not overlook anything important in making your travel preparations.

Task 5: Specific tasks to be completed during visit: develop a clear list of objectives and tasks for your trip before you leave.

Task 6: Review items that may need follow-up after trip: the success of a trip depends on the follow-up that occurs after it is completed.

Objectives

To ensure that the significant amounts of time and money involved in your international business trip are well spent, it's a good idea to define your travel objectives. Be absolutely clear as to what you expect from the trip and make sure you have a way of measuring the trip's success. The following are some of the most important reasons for travelling to foreign market. Which of them apply to your company?

ASSESSING MARKET

Many business travellers go to a foreign market to confirm that there are real opportunities for them in that market. They want to get a sense of how big the market is for their product or service. Is it growing, and if so, how fast? Who are the customers? How can they be reached?

ASSESSING BUSINESS CONDITIONS

Even though a market may be attractive in terms of size and demand, there may be difficulties in getting access to it. Travelling to a country can help get a sense of the political environment and how the government views foreign business people.

- What is the social and economic climate in the country?
- Can you do business given the country's regulatory framework (rules on foreign exchange, repatriation of profits, taxes, tariffs, standards, inspections etc.)?
- How will the country's infrastructure (transportation, telecommunications, institutions etc.) affect your business?
- What logistical arrangements would you have to make to deliver your products or services?

DETERMINING PRODUCT / SERVICE SUITABILITY

In many cases, products or services have to be adapted to suit local conditions. This may be something as simple as putting labels in the local language on a product. Or it can be as complicated as redesigning a product to match local technical requirements. You may want to use the trip to the target market as a way of checking on the suitability of any of the following:

- product or service name - does it translate appropriately?
- appearance, shape, colour?
- marketing approach, slogans, materials?
- approach to distribution, sales, delivery, after-sales service?
- functionality - does it conform to local needs and expectations?
- technical standards - do they conform to local standards?

EVALUATING COMPETITION

Foreign trips can be used to assess the competition.

- What similar products or services are already available in the target market?
- Who provides them: domestic firms or foreign suppliers?
- What share of the market does each competitor control?
- Is competition intense?
- What are the capabilities, assets and strengths of the competing firms?
- Can your firm match them?

DEVELOPING LEADS

Visiting a target market can be useful in developing valuable contacts and leads. Which of the following would be most helpful to your firm's export strategy:

- brokers and intermediaries
- agents
- distributors
- suppliers
- partners
- potential clients

ASSESSING RISKS

A trip can provide insight into the various risks associated with a business venture. The following are some of the types of risks you might want to investigate:

- political: this includes dangers such as seizure of assets, changes in the law, changes in government, and political pressure;
- business risks such as defaults by clients and customers, partners, suppliers; non-performance;
- illegal activity by associates;
- exchange rate fluctuations can have an impact on the profitability of a transaction;

DEVELOPING STRATEGY

Companies may wish to visit a target market as part of the process of developing a market entry strategy, and choosing the best mix of policies relating to product, price, promotion, distribution and service. In light of the information gathered during the visit, which of the following strategies seems most appropriate:

- indirect exporting through a trading house;
- exporting through agents on commission;
- enter into agreements with local distributors export through a consortium of associated firms engage an export management

company hire additional staff to manage the export effort establish a branch office in the target market;

- rely on occasional sales trips to the foreign market;
- enter into a joint-venture with a local partner purchase a local firm;
- sell a license or franchise

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is available to companies that are using international business trips as part of foreign market development. The following is a list of sources outlining the most important federal and/or provincial sources of financial assistance that are available to existing and potential exporters. For additional information about the type of assistance available, eligibility criteria, and application procedures visit the following sites:

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Canadian Trade Commissioner Service
www.infoexport.gc.ca/help_e.asp

Program for Export Market Development (PEMD) www.infoexport.gc.ca/pemd_e.asp

Canadian Commercial Corporation
www.ccc.ca/english/services_expfinance.cfm

Canadian International Development Agency:
Industrial Cooperation Program
w3.acdicida.gc.ca/cida_ind.nsf/85256290006554928525625100813677/dc54003c6e12bd4c852566fd00512ecb?OpenDocument

Business Development Bank of Canada
www.bdc.ca/bdc/home/index.html

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Export Development Programs
ats-sea.agr.ca/public/programs-e.htm

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

B.C. Trade Development Corporation
www.solutions4u.com/pg/pgbus/pgbscat/bc2.htm

Alberta Opportunity Company
www.aoc.gov.ab.ca

Saskatchewan
www.gov.sk.ca/govt/econdev/

Manitoba Trade
www.gov.mb.ca/itt/trade/index.html

Ontario
www.gov.on.ca/MBS/english/business/index.html

Gouvernement of Quebec
www.gouv.qc.ca/XmlDev/Site/Dhtml/Anglais/IndexA.html

Ministère de l'Industrie, du commerce, de la Science et de la Technologie - Quebec
www.micst.gouv.qc.ca/

Government of New Brunswick
www.gov.nb.ca/index1.htm

Government of Nova Scotia
www.gov.ns.ca/

Nova Scotia Open to the World
explore.gov.ns.ca/

Government of Nunavut
www.gov.nu.ca/eng/index.html

Prince Edward Island
www.gov.pe.ca/

Department of Industry, Trade and Technology - Newfoundland and Labrador
www.compusult.nf.ca/ditt/ditt.html

Northwest Territories
www.gov.nt.ca/

Yukon Territories
www.gov.yk.ca/depts/finance/

REGIONAL AGENCY SUPPORT

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)
www.acoa.ca/english/index_frame.html

Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions
www.dec-ced.gc.ca/en/menu.htm

Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario (FEDNOR)
strategis.ic.gc.ca/SSG/fn00300e.html

Western Economic Diversification
www.wd.gc.ca/eng/default.htm

Before You Leave...

There are many different individuals who can help you plan your business trip abroad. See if you can identify other Canadian firms that have done business in the target market and talk to them about their experiences. A good source of information about such firms are the bilateral business councils set up to promote trade between Canada and various countries or regions. Find out if such a council exists for the country in which you are interested.

You might start your search at a trade support organization in your area.

(see: www.infoexport.gc.ca/help-e.asp)

A local Chamber of Commerce or board of trade can help you make contact with a bilateral business council. Sectoral business associations can also be helpful in identifying companies active in foreign markets.

A separate issue to consider is whether or not there are trade missions being organized from Canada into the target market. If so, you may wish to participate in such a mission. Similarly, trade shows, commercial fairs or exhibitions offer a good way of making contact, evaluating a market or getting known. You may wish to time your visit to coincide with such an event.

Once you have done sufficient preliminary research to know what you are looking for, you may wish to contact geographic desk officers at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade or the Canadian Trade Commissioner and commercial staff at the post in the target country.

The following is a list of sources that can provide useful advice and assistance during preparations for a trip abroad.

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade - Market Reports and Contacts in Your Sector
www.infoexport.gc.ca/main-e.asp?act=2

Industry Canada: Market Research Reports
strategis.ic.gc.ca/sc_mrkti/ibinddc/engdoc/1a1.html

Her Own Way Advice for the Woman Traveller 1999
www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/travel/consular/16009-e.htm

Statistics Canada - Trade Data
www.statcan.ca/trade/scripts/tradesearch.cgi

Bon Voyage, But...Information for the Canadian Traveller
www.dfaitmaeci.gc.ca/travel/consular/bvb2000-e.htm

Trade Commissioner Service Abroad
www.infoexport.gc.ca/eservices-e.asp

World Chambers Network
www.worldchambers.com/

Preparing to Leave

Careful preparation is needed to ensure the success of a foreign business trip. The following is a checklist that can be used to guide travel preparations.

CHECK TRAVEL CONDITIONS IN TARGET COUNTRY

Travel Information & Advisory Reports
www.dfaitmaeci.gc.ca/graphics/cosmos/cntry_e.htm

SELECT ITINERARY

Decide on where you want to go? Which cities do you want to visit and in what order? You may want to examine maps of countries at cliffe.nosc.mil/~NATLAS/index.html.

BOOK TRAVEL RESERVATIONS

What connections are available between Canada and your intended destinations? When do you want to travel? Are discounts or seat sales available? Visit Airlines of the Web at flyaow.com/

MAKE HOTEL RESERVATIONS

Make sure that appropriate accommodation will be available. Remember too that you may have to set up meetings with clients at your hotel so choose one suitable for that purpose.

PREPARE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

You will need a valid Canadian passport ([see: www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/passport/passport.htm](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/passport/passport.htm)) to travel to all countries except the United States. In many cases, you will also need a visa issued by the countries you intend to visit. For certain countries, you will also need evidence of immunization ([see: www.hcsc.gc.ca/hpb/lcdc/osh/travel/immpro_e.html](http://www.hcsc.gc.ca/hpb/lcdc/osh/travel/immpro_e.html)) or a health certificate.

PREPARE BUSINESS CARDS, MARKETING MATERIALS

Make sure to take suitable promotional materials with you. At a minimum you will need business cards and brochures describing

your company and its products or services. You may also wish to bring along diskettes, CD-ROMs, videotapes or samples. If you are taking samples or equipment, you will need a carnet (www.icc-ibcc.org/atcarnet.html) that will allow you to take the items through foreign customs without being charged duties.

CONTACT CANADIAN POSTS ABROAD

Once your travel plans are advanced, you should contact the Canadian representatives (www.infoexport.gc.ca/eservices-e.asp) in the countries you intend to visit, to inform them of your trip, what you hope to achieve, and when you intend to arrive. In many cases, the posts can help to arrange and confirm appointments with potential buyers, procurement authorities, agents, distributors, joint venture partners, appropriate government departments, industry associations, and others.

ARRANGE MEETINGS

Contact the leads you have researched or that have been suggested to you and arrange for meetings. Make sure that the time, place and purpose of the meeting is clear to both sides. And be sure that both sides know how to get in touch with each other if there is a change in plans.

STUDY RELEVANT CULTURAL ISSUES

Prepare for your meetings by studying business practices (see: strategis.ic.gc.ca/SSG/bi18354e.html) in the target countries. Often there are certain do's and don'ts you should be aware of that will make contact easier. For more information visit the following sites:

MARKET RESEARCH:

strategis.ic.gc.ca/sc_mrkti/ibinddc/engdoc/1a1.html

Embassies in Ottawa www.docuweb.ca/EmbassiesOttawa/index.html
Country Studies - Library of Congress
lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html

ARRANGE FOR ANY GIFTS

In many countries, it is customary to present small gifts to contacts as a token of appreciation. Make sure, however, that these gifts are suitable to the occasion and that your intentions are not misunderstood. Selected items for International Business Executives and Sophisticated Shoppers are listed at www.internationalist.com/INTRNTNL/store.html

EXAMINE TRAVEL CONDITIONS

Find out as much as you can about travel conditions in the target country. Visit the website www.internationalist.com/INTRNTNL/travel.html

The following are some topics you might want to investigate:

- climate and business attire
- local transportation
- domestic airlines
- interpreters
- foreign exchange rate and local currency
- airport customs and formalities
- prescription and preventive medications
- out of country medical insurance
- food
- phone, fax, internet, computer
- national holidays
- business hours
- emergency information, local hospital,
- local crime rate,
- safety requirements
- departure regulations
- how to network in the country

- attitude towards foreigners in the country
- social customs, behavior, greetings, gestures, conversation
- business negotiation procedures
- invitation to social functions
- background information on the country
- structure and outline for data collection and marketing
- strategy reports

CURRENCY AND EXCHANGE RATE CONVERTOR

Make sure that you have enough local currency (see: www.xe.net/ict/) with you for the trip. You can also use credit cards, and even bank cards in many countries. You may also wish to take additional money with you in the form of US currency or travellers cheques.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES CONVERTER: A weights and measures converter is available at: www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/8107/convert.html

Checklist

The following checklist summarizes the various tasks that may be performed during an international business trip. You can use it to organize your own activities abroad.

- Meet potential customers and determine product/service suitability for market
- Confirm market size and growth potential
- Determine an appropriate price level for your product or service
- Obtain data on the competition
- Identify potential agents and distributors and verify their financial and business strengths/weaknesses
- Locate storage and distribution facilities
- Identify local resource people
- Locate legal and accounting services
- Obtain information about local regulations and requirements relating to patents, R&D, technology licensing and intellectual property rights
- Confirm information on regulations affecting business, shipping, marking, labelling, documentation, tariffs and possible non-tariff barriers
- Obtain information that will assist in preparing a marketing strategy (customer profiles, income levels, tastes and preferences, how purchasing decisions are made, how sales are made)

Follow-up Items

To get the most out of your trip abroad, be sure to follow-up after you get home. Your overall objective should be to develop and maintain contact with those you met who seem to offer the best prospects for an ongoing business relationship. The following are some of the tasks you may need to address upon your return:

- Send letters of thanks to those who took the time to meet with you.
- Raise any additional issues that you may feel are relevant to the discussion.
- Satisfy any requests for additional information from those with whom you met.
- Inform the trade commissioners, or other Canadian officials who helped you, about the trip's outcome. They may have ideas about useful next steps to take.
- Prepare any market reports or other studies that may be required as an outcome of the trip.
- Review action items arising from the trip and set up a process for implementation.