

Government: The Forgotten Collaborator



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Many of our executive coaching clients report feeling overwhelmed due to the daunting challenges of dizzying technological change coupled with instant dissemination of vast amounts of information -- and increasingly, disinformation -- in our hyper-connected world. The current rate, magnitude and complexity of change we are experiencing are unparalleled in human history. The business paradigms that worked well in the past no longer apply, leaving many executives uncertain and adrift.

The increasingly complex challenges of the volatile and uncertain global economy raise their stress levels even further. Protectionism is on the rise in the US, in parts of Europe and elsewhere. The relevance of vitally-important institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund is now challenged by their largest member. This is seriously undermining the safeguards of free and fair systems of global trade and investment. The prospects of major and destabilizing trade wars are imminent and expanding. Add, the alarmingly destructive impact of climate change and many fear we are at a tipping point of no return...

Though weakened, multilateralism is still alive, as the following three examples show:

- the initiative to create the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP);
- the ongoing negotiations to modernize NAFTA, and
- the successful conclusion in 2017 of the Canada - E.U. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

These key initiatives have demonstrated how national governments can successfully collaborate in lowering or even eliminating barriers to international commerce, thus benefitting all participant nations. And, the Paris Agreement of April 2016 marked a turning point in the battle against climate change. For the first time in history, world leaders united to legally ratify action against increases of greenhouse gas emissions through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. However, full implementation remains a challenge. The sole exception to this breakthrough agreement is the United States, which intends to withdraw from the Accord.

Excellent business opportunities still exist in foreign markets; though many executives are not fully aware of the wide variety of helpful programs governments directly offer to businesses. These include, in particular, export advisory expertise, as well as contracting, insurance and financing services. In many ways, government is truly the forgotten, yet invaluable collaborator in the success of business in global markets.

In Canada, for instance, the Trade Commissioner Service (TCS) assists companies to exploit new export opportunities, invest in foreign markets and find foreign R&D partners. TCS, which was created in 1894, has trade commissioners located in offices across Canada and in over 100 locations around the world. For American exporters the U.S. Commercial Service is the trade promotion arm of the Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration. U.S. Commercial Service has trade officers in over 100 U.S. cities and more than 75 countries where they assist companies to begin exporting and/or exploiting sales opportunities in new global markets.

Export Development Canada (EDC) is considered by many as the premier export credit agency in the world. Its products and services include a wide range of trade credit insurance programs, in addition to export financing for Canadian exporters and their foreign customers. In the United States, the Export - Import Bank (EXIM) provides American businesses with an array of trade financing solutions - including export credit

insurance, working capital guarantees, and guarantees of commercial loans to foreign buyers - to promote the exports of U.S. goods and services.

The Canadian Commercial Corporation (CCC) offers collaborative project development and foreign contracting expertise to assist exporters in securing contracts with foreign government buyers. As prime contractor, CCC signs and manages contracts with foreign governments on behalf of Canadian suppliers. The CCC has two core program portfolios: Defense and Security and Infrastructure Projects. The Defense and Security Programs with the U.S. on behalf of Canadian exporters have evolved as the primary role for the corporation.

These government entities promote the sale of billions of dollars of goods and services for businesses every year. The current global business environment is exceptionally challenging and will probably remain so for the foreseeable future. Those businesses that work collaboratively with their governments, however, are far more likely to obtain long term success than those that do not.