

Importers of babies and childrenswear

By Kevin Lynch

Yes, believe it or not, this was the title of a letter sent from the Commercial Section in the British Embassy in Riyadh, in November 1997. No names, no pack drill.

When I saw this letter heading I thought I would have a look and see what else (in a more serious light) we did in the month of November. A rapid look through our November files told me why the month went so quickly. It also confirmed my original suspicion that as a section we cover a multitude of sins.

I am not sure that any particular event took precedence. The many small and big things make up the whole. For me, I suspect that it would have been nice to concentrate all our energies on one big promotion of UK Plc and then sit back and watch the trade statistics creep up and up. That, however, is not the way it is. We dealt with:-

1. Over 150 requests for information about exporting from the UK to Saudi Arabia. Requests ranged from the amount of damage done by termites (a UK company wished to gauge the size of the market for their pesticide) to ingredients for pastry, from sewer repair kits to the address of (now Sir) Elton John's company.
2. We completed three Tailored Market Information Reports (reports for which the Government charges the business world) and another potential twelve were dealt with. In the first eight months of this financial year, work on Market Information Reports went up 14.5%.
3. We dealt with the Saudi British Trade

and Investment Mission led by Sir Alan Munro, a cold call from the Medway NHS Trust (asking about training systems for MODA), the Saudi Print and Plastic Exhibition and a visit by nine British firms led by London Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

4. We also received a good chit from our Internal Auditors who were with us for three days.

While these visit were going on; we got approval for the export of British rabbits to the Kingdom (for our readers in the veterinary sector, there was a problem with Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis). We assisted a Saudi company which was worried about its logo being a tad too close to one of the Royal Coats of Arms. An amended version of the logo was approved by the Royal Matters Committee. Ted Cole arranged with Garrard to have a multi-million pound jewellery exhibition in the Embassy next March.

Meanwhile, Mr. Zaman was in the UK for Interbuild, Mr. Chadwick visited the Dubai Airshow, HMA invited the CEO of ARAMCO to the UK, and Richard Northern was doing business in the Eastern Province. I visited the Riyadh Sewerage Works!

We also had pantomime rehearsals!

Despite all of the above, as the title bears witness, we are not totally perfect! And indeed a lot of the above could not have been achieved without our colleagues in Jeddah and Al-Khobar, the RGGB and Riyadh Exhibition Centre.

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INVISIBLES

By Richard Northern

British Invisibles (BI) has now merged with CEENET, the Corporation of London's export promotion company, to form the "new" British Invisibles.

Information is the new global currency. Britain's ability to sell knowledge and expertise, be it in banking, accountancy, asset management, insurance, professional services or training, is a major economic asset. It generated £153 billion (18% of GDP) in the last financial year. BI's aim is to increase UK-based firms' share of world markets in financial services by:

- organising outward and inward missions and briefings.
- working for the removal of international barriers to trade in services.
- reinforcing London's position as the world's leading international financial centre (and promoting Edinburgh as a key European financial centre).
- making the contribution of invisible exports to the UK's economy more widely understood.