

## ITAC-Led Trade Missions: Looking Back, Looking Forward

**By Karna Gupta, President and CEO, ITAC**

**January 23, 2014**

January is traditionally a month for both reflection and planning new initiatives. As I look back over 2013, one of the highlights — our trade mission to India in December — also points toward a future area of focus for ITAC, as well as a key value we can offer to our SME community.

Seven companies joined us in this mission, along with representatives of Export Development Canada, Trade and Invest British Columbia, Canada's Industrial Research Assistance Program, and Industry Canada. With two cities on our agenda — Bangalore and Delhi — the mission included a one-day government-to-government meeting, which is a continuation of the Canada/India ICT Joint Working Group that ITAC belongs to, while the other four days were focused on business-to-business sessions to create market opportunities for the Canadian companies.

These B2B meetings were designed for success, and the feedback we have received from the participants tells us that we met our goal. One example of the winning design was to follow a challenge/response model. The Indian companies involved in our sessions set out their key areas of focus and outlined specific problem areas. In response, the Canadian companies had an opportunity to showcase their technologies and the specific solutions that could address the needs and priorities identified by their Indian counterparts. This type of approach sets the stage for potential bilateral discussions between buyer and seller.

Overall, my impression was that this mission yielded better results than more traditional trips, and there are five key takeaways that could be applied to future ventures:

- Set out expected outcomes in advance;
- Use local resources of the Canadian Government to establish the best-possible venues;
- Ensure that the right local participants are involved;
- Target discussions around 'problem identification' and 'possible solutions'; and
- Create follow-up, bilateral, B2B meetings, rather than group sessions.

Missions like this one form an important element of ITAC's International Business Development Strategy, 2012-15, which you can read [here](#), and we are quickly moving forward to pursue future initiatives in India and Dubai, as well as looking to Latin America for other opportunities.

I want to extend ITAC's appreciation to Canada's local trade commissioners in India, who were critical to the success of this mission. They did a superb job at orchestrating the logistics, and in establishing key meetings that were requested with specific people.