

VEGA

Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance

Harold "Hal" Handley, 2011 VEGA Volunteer Impact Service Award Recipient

A former Senior Vice President with McCormick & Company with 47 years of experience in food product sales, marketing and production, Harold ("Hal") Handley has worked extensively in emerging economies around the world helping agribusinesses develop strategic plans, consulting on organization structure and evaluating product performance.

In preparation for his assignment in Sri Lanka, Hal conducted exhaustive background research on the Sri Lankan cinnamon industry, which ultimately allowed him to hit the ground running upon arrival in Colombo. He met with the Sri Lankan Ambassador and Commercial Minister at the Sri Lankan Embassy in Washington, DC to highlight the project, obtain additional insights, and engender high-level government support for the branding initiative.



Soon after arriving in Sri Lanka, during Hal's in-country market assessment, he realized that the new U.S. Food Safety Modernization Act, signed in to law in January 2011, would have significant ramifications for Sri Lankan cinnamon as the law imposes a number of requirements regarding inspections, record keeping, controls, registrations and certifications to be able to export food products to the U.S. Although outside the scope of his project, Hal began a campaign to inform the local stakeholders of this new regulation, of which none of them were aware at the time. In addition to meeting all required deliverables, including a comprehensive, world class strategic plan for branding Ceylon Cinnamon, Hal solicited and secured proposals from a number of prominent marketing and public relations firms who are interested in promoting Ceylon Cinnamon in the United States.

Even after the formal end of his project, Hal has continued to work remotely to promote marketing and brand development over the course of the last six months. With ceaseless enthusiasm, hard work, and good will, he has continued to research, meet with the Embassy officials and relevant counterparts in the U.S., and provide information to the EDB and Spice Council to address the U.S. regulatory challenges for Ceylon Cinnamon and promote the brand in the U.S. He sees the potential for this work to make a significant impact on the Sri Lankan national economy and, thereby, the livelihoods of people throughout the country.



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