

NH's Commercial Consul for Brazil Helps Develop International Business Relationships

BEDFORD, NH—Craig Cassarino has spent decades focused on sustainability of resources in both New Hampshire and Brazil, so it's very fitting that now, as New Hampshire's Commercial Consul for Brazil, he is now serving as a resource for Granite State businesses interested in doing business in Brazil. Cassarino, who is a partner in Leonardo Technologies, Inc. of Bedford, New Hampshire, works closely with the International Trade Resource Center (ITRC) to help New Hampshire companies connect with the agents, distributors, financing sources, government agencies and individuals needed to do business in Brazil.

“Brazil is the largest industrial manufacturer in South America,” Cassarino explains. “We're working with ITRC on a number of initiatives, including taking a trade mission to Brazil, Argentina and Chile in spring 2007. This will give New Hampshire companies the chance to meet South American companies and learn about what it takes to do business there.

“I've worked with ITRC before on past trade missions,” Cassarino continues, “and their participation helped create the best response ever. The ITRC staff is terrific—they respond quickly when it's needed, yet they also understand that building an international business takes time. Each company needs to develop a resource base as well as an understanding of the country's culture.”

Cassarino has developed an in-depth understanding of Brazil's culture over the past decade and a half; and he sees connecting cultures as an important aspect of his work as Commercial Consul. As part of this effort, Bahia, one of the 26 states in Brazil, is being considered for status as a sister state with New Hampshire. A Brazilian cultural event in New Hampshire is also being planned to give Granite Staters a taste of Brazilian culture.

Cassarino first visited Brazil in 1989 after selling his New Hampshire recycling company; he quickly felt so at home that he moved to Sao Paulo. He saw that Brazil, which has the seventh largest economy in the world, needed assistance in environmental engineering, renewable energy and recycling—his areas of expertise—and that the Brazilians were interested in partnering with U.S. firms in order to gain the needed technology and financing. Over the next seven years, he made many contacts in Brazil and worked with the US Commercial Consul to help match Brazilian projects, primarily in recycling, with US companies. He also met and married his wife, Catita, who is Brazilian.

In 1996, Cassarino was invited to join a New Hampshire firm, so he and Catita moved to the Granite State. One of the first projects he focused on was in Brazil. Since then, he has returned frequently to Brazil; this has enabled him to deepen his understanding of the culture while further keeping abreast of developments and opportunities. He's often accompanied by Catita and their seven-year-old son, Caio, who welcome the chance to visit with family and friends in Brazil.

“I love entrepreneurship and helping businesses succeed, especially when two cultures and countries are involved,” Cassarino explains. “When it works, both countries benefit. For example, energy is a hot topic in Brazil and the country will probably be energy-independent by the end of this year. It's also one of the leading countries in the world interested in the development of alcohol-based fuels. If we can bring a New Hampshire-based company's technology for developing bio-fuel to Brazil, it can create jobs and educational opportunities in Brazil as well as generate growth for the company back here in the States. Brazilian farmers could grow the crops necessary to product the fuel; an educated refinery workforce would need to be developed on the ground; and Brazil would be a potential market for the fuel. This type of situation speaks to sustainability at every level.”

Cassarino points out that it's not as difficult as might be imagined to enter the international marketplace in Brazil. Still, companies would find it difficult to do so on

their own; while the guidance and assistance of the ITRC, Cassarino and others can help companies make the transition successfully.

“It is an honor for me to serve as commercial consul to Brazil for New Hampshire,” concludes Cassarino. “Not only do I have the opportunity to help make a positive impact, in a way, I’m creating a legacy for my son. If we can develop a relationship between New Hampshire and Brazil, he will be a part of it and will have his own opportunities to make a difference.”

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Photo: Craig Cassarino, New Hampshire’s Commercial Consult to Brazil, with his wife, Catita, and their seven-year-old son, Caio.