



# EXPERT EXPORT GUIDES

## HOW DO YOU IMPLEMENT YOUR EXPORT STRATEGY?

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# HOW DO YOU IMPLEMENT YOUR EXPORT STRATEGY?

Once you have decided upon your target market and have developed a focussed strategy for the route to that market, with clear milestones to hit along the way, what next? How do you put those plans into action?

It's all well and good having the perfect strategy on paper, but it's no good if that's where it stays. Someone has to implement the actions, make sure we hit the milestones and reach our targets.

As with anything worth doing, implementing the strategy requires focus. Someone has to concentrate on the project and make it happen. This is equally true if you have decided to look for a distributor or agent, or are looking to employ your own team.

Do you have the resource in your organisation to do this? Who will you allocate the task to? Do you need outside support?

We will look at these options in detail but for now whatever the decision, it is important that the person(s) has the time to dedicate to the plan, to this new target market.

It takes time to fully understand a market, to know the movers and shakers, to dig deep and uncover opportunities. You cannot do that if your team is spread too thinly. Make sure they have the time to allocate to this important task.

Importantly customers want to see a constant presence. This builds confidence in your company and your long-term commitment to their market. Not all customers are looking for a quick, short term gain by constantly switching suppliers, they like to build relationships. Reliability is imperative to them.

You cannot build that customer confidence with what we call 'touch and go' selling. You make an effort for a month or two, visit even, but then other priorities take over and you are silent for 2-3 months. What happens? The customer forgets, or even worse dismisses you as unreliable and you have to start all over again!

In one company we worked with, they had two excellent sales managers, one covering 32 countries and another who concentrated mainly on one. The result was a low market share overall for the former, and 70% share for the other. Which one do you think made the most profit for the company?

We changed the focus so that the 32-country man concentrated his proactive efforts on those areas with most potential and was reactive only in the others. The result was he gained 50% market share in the area of special focus and maintained his share in the others, increasing turnover and profitability at the same time.

It's an important lesson to learn.

**"A man's GOT to know his limitations"** as Clint Eastwood famously said in the movie Magnum Force way back in 1973!

It may be a generation ago, but the truest sayings stand the test of time.

Depending on the size of market you are targeting, the potential returns and your available resources, having someone dedicated to the new market within your organisation to lead the charge is usually the best option.

As we touched upon in the previous email however it is important this person has the time to focus and the expertise to make a difference.

Do you have a current member of staff with the experience and expertise in international markets? Do you have an Export Manager or Director for example? Will your current Sales Manager or Director cover both roles? Has he/she the time to do this effectively?

The last thing you want to do is to grow your export sales, but to damage your current sales at the same time by taking away time and resource. The net effect will end up being zero, or even worse, negative on the organisation as a whole.

It is not a given that, because someone is a star performer in their home market, they will be able to work to the same level internationally. It is not something you know instinctively how to do.

Assess their experience and expertise. Use an outside resource to do this if in any doubt. You may want to consider using a Mentor to guide them in the initial phases until they feel confident to go it alone.

They need to be aware of the way of doing business in your target market, to be flexible, and importantly to be patient. The fact you are market leader in your home country does not necessarily impress your targets. It may open doors, but you have to earn respect and trust in the marketplace. That all takes time.

Even if your route-to-market decision was to look for a distributor/agent, as we have seen, you need an experienced internal resource to motivate and support, to ensure they are working tirelessly on your behalf.

It is not a given that an existing employee will want to take on the challenge. This role will require a lot of travelling, time away from their family and friends, often time alone far away from home. It's not for everyone.

If you do not already have the resource, then recruiting someone new is the next option. Recruiting always has its challenges, are you actually getting what it says on the tin for example. It's expensive and you are definitely adding overhead to your business where it may take some time to generate a return.

If you find the right person however this can be the start of something good. They will have the time to dedicate to the new market, coupled with the right knowledge to make an impact.

So, look closely at your internal resources first and see if anyone fits the bill. If not, you have a decision to make; recruit the necessary expertise as a full-time employee; or use the services of a suitably qualified and experienced consultant.

You may feel recruiting someone new is a risk and expensive at the same time. You may not want to increase your head count or fixed costs at the present time.

The option then is to utilise the services of a consultant with the necessary international sales experience. They can help create faster results as they know from experience what is required, who to talk to and how.

Their experience means they are aware of what to look for in a distributor or agent, how to generate the first customers and can advise you on making sure you are ready internally to fulfil the customer's expectations.

A good consultant with the necessary drive and determination can be an excellent resource for your business. You also have the benefit that it is a flexible resource. You buy-in just the amount of time and expertise as you require or your budget will allow. There is less commitment and fixed costs.

This can be a real advantage if you are dipping your toe in the export market for the first time and want to see the results before making a full commitment.

Comparing costs on a daily basis to having your own employee will on first glance look expensive, but remember you avoid the hidden costs of employing someone, the pensions, health insurance, holiday and sick pay etc plus the potential hassles and headaches.

The right consultant, with usually years of experience and expertise to draw upon, is a flexible resource that can bring fast returns, without you having to make a major commitment.

Go Exporting is one of the few consultancies that specialises in this area and we would be pleased to discuss your project. With 25+ years of experience in opening and expanding international markets we are well placed to provide the support you require at whatever level you feel comfortable with.

Don't take our word for it however. We recommend you look around at 2-3 consultancies to find the one that is the best fit for you. Be sure to look at the value they can bring to your business rather than just the costs.



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