



# EXPERT EXPORT GUIDES

**PERFECT EXECUTION**

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# PERFECT EXECUTION

Well done! You've made your entry into the market, created awareness of your company and product/service, secured the first orders and appointed distributor(s)/agent(s) if that was your strategy.

Job done right? Well, definitely **NOT JOB DONE!**

The real hard work is just beginning. Don't blow it now by being complacent or thinking everything will go fine. You have to make sure everything is perfect. First impressions really do count in this context. Make a mess of the first order and your job just became 10 times more difficult, perhaps even impossible.

Your new customer will be on the lookout for any problems, any errors, quality issues or lapses in service. They will already be slightly apprehensive about using a new supplier. You will be under the closest scrutiny and there may well be those in the organisation with long-standing relationships with your competitors who will be very resistant to change. Sometimes they can even be downright obstructive.

The key is to not give them any ammunition to fire at you. Make it perfect. Ensure you are on top of the whole process from receipt of order, opening an account if applicable, delivering on time, logistics, paperwork, customs arrangements, packaging, user instructions etc. Make sure you have covered everything, give these orders your number 1 priority.

Make sure everyone in your organisation sees you doing this and engage them in the importance of these first orders. Make it a team effort, get everyone on-board with the importance of perfection.

It is important to make dealing with your company as straight forward as possible for your new customer, don't give them any reason to change their minds. **Close the door to buyer's remorse!**

Also critical is to ensure this first delivery, whether product or service, is the best quality it can be. Don't compromise or be tempted to 'make do' as this is a far-off market. Right now, it is your most important market! Get it right and it can become your core market of the future.

You'll never know if you don't do it right the first time and set the standard for what the customers can expect for the future.

## **Complete the Job**

So, now we have delivered our first orders, we've ensured they ran seamlessly, it was easy for the customer and that the product/service was of the highest quality.

Finally, job done, and we can relax right? ABSOLUTELY NOT!

This is just the start. In athletics terms, we are just off the starting blocks and about to explode up to full speed. It's taken a lot of time and effort to get to this stage, following the athletics theme, we've done the training and passed the preliminary rounds, we've started the race and now need to get up to full speed, then to finish strong!

Only in your business you will never reach the finish line as it will be continually moving further away, you will always be looking to reach new heights, to grow.

Don't make the cardinal error that a lot of new exporters make and think that your product/service will speak for itself, and the customers will keep coming back. They don't.

Follow up with the customer, visit them soon after delivery, make sure they are happy with the product/service itself and that the whole ordering and delivery process has matched their expectations.

If there are any issues raised, however small or petty they may seem to you, deal with them, there and then, no delays or excuses, even if you do not fully agree with the assessment. Cut off the complaint at the ankles, don't let it grow to become a reason to go back to their previous supplier. Don't let the doubters in their organisation gain a voice.

If, despite your best efforts, there has been a genuine issue, that need not be a disaster providing you deal with it well. Sort out the issue, deal with it efficiently, compensate the customer if needs be, even a small gesture can often work wonders.

Provide all the support the customer needs and it can actually enhance your reputation in the future. Amazon has built an empire on this concept!

Customer confidence is an important factor in deciding your success or failure.

In one company I worked with, we gained a first order for a key player in Germany for a highly engineered product which was critical to the operation of the customers production plant. Any issues would cost £1000's per hour in lost output. Delivery and installation had to be during their scheduled shutdown.

We were late delivering due to shipping delays. It was still within the shutdown, but the installation was going to run overtime. As you can imagine there were a lot of raised voices, tensions and blood pressure!

To resolve the situation, we flew in additional supervisors to allow 24/7 working and managed to finish just in time! We then provided an additional specialist process engineer to fine tune the system to ensure the customer maximised their output.

The result was the customer was happy and actually gained additional production capacity. The extra cost we incurred was paid back many times over in future business, not just with that plant, but with their whole group worldwide!

Always ask the customer "How could we improve next time?". This has a two-fold benefit. You are already building the expectation in the customer that there will be a next time, plus you will find out from their reaction their true feelings. If they say, "what next time?", then you know you have more work to do to find the root cause of their reluctance.

Always listen very carefully to what they say and what they do not say. Read between the lines. Ask others in the organisation too. Build a picture so you know what you are up against.

Then use the information to become their No. 1 supplier!

## The Catapult

These first orders are your catapult to future sales. They are the basis upon which you will grow. As we have seen they are critical and require your 100% attention, before, during and after the sale.

What next? How do we turn the first orders into future orders and sustained growth?

The first easy step, but one which is often overlooked, is to never be afraid to ask for the next order! There's an old English saying "Don't ask, don't get" which is so true.

Find out how often your customer purchases your product/service. Know their demand and their ordering cycle. How far in advance do they order? Do they hold stock?

Make sure you are in the right place and the right time for the next orders. There's nothing more frustrating than calling a customer only to find they placed an order yesterday with your competition! Don't let that happen. Be in their minds at all times, know when to push, but don't be too pushy either to the point where you annoy them. It's important to build a good relationship with your customer, make them a friend even.

The next step in using the first orders as your catapult in the market is to ask, "Who else should I be talking to?"

You've worked hard to gain the trust of your customer and by now should have a pretty good relationship with key members of their team. Use that position to ask for their help. Generally, people like to please and will be only too happy to show this and their knowledge by giving you their contacts. Ask them for a personal introduction.

These warm introductions make your job of creating credibility and reliability that much easier. If Company X is using you then Company Y will feel that much more relaxed in making a buying decision.

Leverage these relationships to as great an extent as you can, and you will soon see business growing.

Ideally ask your customer to put something in writing showing that they are ordering from you and that they are completely happy with the product/service and support of your organisation. If they do not have time, offer to write it for them just to sign if they are happy with the content.

With their permission develop this into a case study to really highlight your capabilities. Show the benefits you have brought to the customer, really highlight your Value Proposition. Include quotes from the customer, photographs where relevant. Create a picture of how great it is to deal with you and the real, tangible benefits for the customer. Go in to as much detail as your customer will allow without giving away sensitive information.

References and case studies from key players in the market will quickly build your credibility and confidence in your organisation. Be systematic in your approach, make it part of the sales process, not an afterthought when asked by your marketing team.

There is no difference in approach when using a distributor/agent. You need to work with them to ensure they follow this approach. Insist on visiting the customer with them. As we have said before the distributor is in many ways your most important customer. At the same time, they are your primary sales point in the country, so use them to make sure you grow. Don't allow them to dictate the pace if it is slower than you want to go.

Follow these simple steps and you will see your business multiply. Keep pushing. Never relax. Visit the target market often. Keep your profile high. Show your intent to be a key player. Do this and the sales will come.

**Before you know it, you will have achieved your target of £1m in Export Sales!**



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**GO EXPORTING**  
Opening a World of Opportunities

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