

Export Success: An Interview with Dave Foxcroft, Fox 40 International

By Andrée
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At the recent *Canadian Sporting Goods Show*, TCS International had the opportunity to speak with a Canadian exporter, Dave Foxcroft, vice-president of Fox 40 International Inc. of Hamilton, Ontario. Ten years ago, Fox 40 (formerly known as Fortron International Inc.) was a domestic player with dreams of exporting. Today, the company exports its whistles to more than 100 countries worldwide, deals with over 200 distributors, and employs 20 people in Canada. Our discussion with Dave Foxcroft gave us some valuable information about his exporting experience, and of the role of the Trade Commissioner Service in the company's success.

Q Tell me a little bit about your export experience.

A We started to export 10 years ago, and had no idea how to do it. We went to shows over in Europe, mainly ISPO shows, and basically learned a lot. Number one, we've learned that the key thing to exporting is using the right type of packaging for the country that you're dealing with. Packaging has to be correct — it has to be in several different languages. Recycling has been a big issue as well.

Q How do you determine a distributor?

A At shows like this one, we put up a big bright yellow sign at

our booth that says "distributors wanted" or "sales reps wanted." In Canada, we're our own distributor. Internationally, we try to limit the number of distributors per country to a maximum of two. We have a major and a minor in every country — one person to deal with the major retailers and one to deal with the "mom and pop" retailers.

Q How do our offices abroad help you?

A In the beginning, they helped us with distributors. They would do credit checks for us, which were actually reputation checks. Now that we're established, we lean on their shoulders for advice on how to do business in the country, and for further information about the market. The posts really helps us to understand the country and how they do business.

Q Have you used the posts to escort you at all when you're abroad?

A When we first went to Asia, we went on a trip organized by the government. It was an excellent opportunity for us to meet people over there. The functions that they held, events where business leaders meet business leaders, are really great. But a lot of our success is because we're a quality product and Canada is associated with quality internationally.

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