

1. INTERNAL EVALUATION

Companies that want to start exporting or to expand their exporting into new foreign markets usually devote some time to evaluating their own capabilities, resources and capacity. Specifically, their objective is to develop a sense of what the company does well. This analysis should help the business planner understand the strengths and weaknesses of the organization. It should also help establish its overall strategic direction and contribute to an identification of markets in which the company can do well.

PRODUCT AND/OR SERVICE

- How unique is your product or service?
- Is it proprietary or protected in some way through patents, trademarks, copyright etc., or through investment in brand-name recognition?
- How important is innovation in your product and/or service?
- What are the unique features of your product and/or service? Are they easily copied?
- Is customization of your product or service an integral part of what you are selling?
- Is the price important? What are you doing to lower yours? Are there barriers to entry?
- How important is technology? What are your research and development plans? How do they compare with others in the industry? Do you have access to the talent you need?

OPERATIONS AND PRODUCTION PROCESSES

- Are your production processes and internal operations effective? For example, can you produce and deliver a product more cheaply than anyone else or with better quality? Do you have low overheads? Are you constantly thinking about new ways to lower costs, improve quality or enhance service?
- Are your internal processes unique? Are they proprietary in any way? Can they be easily copied or duplicated?
- What are the barriers that other firms would face if they attempt to enter your business niche?
- How important are quality, price, reliability or timeliness to your customers?
- How well-integrated are you with suppliers and distributors? Is this essential for your business?