

## How to be a Successful David to their Goliath: Tips for Doing Business in the United States

### 1. Know your market

Focus is the key. The United States is not just one market, but five or six different regions where connections and distribution channels can vary widely. Find out how your sector works in the region, take time to do a thorough market assessment and develop a precisely targeted marketing strategy.

### 2. Obtain market studies

Getting information on foreign markets is integral to your successful market entry. Market information on sector opportunities for a wide variety of goods and services is available on the *InfoExport* Web site at [www.infoexport.gc.ca](http://www.infoexport.gc.ca)

### 3. Know the rules and regulations

Become familiar with the marketing and merchandising requirements at all levels of government affecting your product. There are important differences in how business is done, and notwithstanding NAFTA and a more liberalized trading environment, there are still barriers, such as the "Buy American" factor, that may limit your access to the market.

### 4. Know how to quote prices

Firms must quote in U.S. dollars on a "delivered" basis to U.S. customers. FOB ex-Canada is not an option. U.S. buyers and distributors want goods delivered to their door, with Customs clearances and other ancillaries taken care of by supplier. Develop the transportation/Customs expertise needed to quote and supply successfully.

### 5. Promote your product with flair

The U.S. market is so large that offering a product without supporting merchandising and marketing materials is not enough. Companies must develop product literature, promotional information and advertising to distinguish themselves from the competition.

### 6. Understand the importance of salesmanship

Pricing and the ability to supply in volumes often much larger than your entire Canadian market are critical to your export success. The lower Canadian dollar does not necessarily guarantee competitiveness. Be ready to spend money in order to make money, as part of your market strategy.

### 7. Include media relations in your marketing plan

Press reports of your company in the Canadian and U.S. media can influence sales of your product to consumers and of your company stock to investors. An article in a reputable business publication is considered to be objective and therefore more credible than advertising. It will pay to work with a professional communicator.

### 8. Consider your options for sales networks

Distributors and manufacturers representatives play an important role in making business happen in the United States. If you are considering a U.S. address to import and distribute your

goods, inquire about state taxes from a U.S. accounting firm

### 9. Form a strategic alliance with another firm

A formal relationship between two entities that have shared goals and economic interests, a strategic alliance with another firm (Canadian or U.S.) can put your company in a better position to find clients, fulfil contracts, and compete in the international market. The Canadian trade offices in the United States can help you find a partner.

### 10. Be ready to provide local after-sales service and technical support

Your company is often better served by linking up with U.S.-based counterparts (through partnering, licensing, or franchising), rather than trying to service the market directly from Canada.

### 11. Check your insurance

Protect yourself from legal action against your product or service with liability insurance, and consider export credit insurance as security in the event of non payment of bills. EDC (page 15) and private insurance companies can advise you.  $\Delta$

