

TIP

Becoming involved in local export community events can help you learn the export ropes. Seminars and business breakfasts, for example, can be excellent opportunities to profit from other people's experience with exporting.

PITFALL

Lack of commitment – when problems arise, the exporter does not have the human or financial resources to deal with start-up problems.

Evaluating your export potential

Can your product or service find a worthwhile market outside Canada? Getting this right is crucial – if there's no demand for what you're offering, you'd obviously be unwise to proceed. But how do you come up with the answer? Here are some factors to consider:

Customer profile

- Who already uses your product or service?
- Is it in broad general use or limited to a particular group?
- Is it popular with a certain age group?
- Are there other significant demographic patterns to its use?
- What climatic or geographic factors affect the use of your product or service?

Product modification

- Are modifications required to make it appeal to foreign customers?
- What is its shelf life? Will this be reduced by time in transit?
- Is the packaging expensive? Can it be easily modified to satisfy the demands of foreign customers?
- Is special documentation required? Does it need to meet any technical or regulatory requirements?

Transportation

- How easily can it be transported?
- Would transportation costs make competitive pricing a problem?

Local Representation

- Does it require professional assembly or other technical skills?
- Is after-sales service needed? If so, is it available locally or do you have to provide it? Do you have the resources to do this?

Exporting Services

- If you're exporting services, what is unique or special about them?
- Are your services considered to be world-class?
- Do you need to modify your services to allow for differences in language, culture and business environment?
- How do you plan to deliver your services: in person, with a local partner or electronically?

Capacity

- Will you be able to serve both your existing domestic customers and your new foreign clients?
- If your domestic demand increases, will you still be able to look after your export customers or vice versa?