



PREPARING YOUR EXPORT PLAN

Now, it's time to start preparing a successful export plan. You will need to gather information about your company and about the markets you are considering.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Planning and preparation are essential to any business, whether domestic or international. They define a direction and a purpose. A sound plan will establish where your business is going and suggest how it proposes to get there. It forces you to look at your company's operations and re-evaluate the assumptions upon which it is founded. In doing so, you can identify weak spots as well as strengths in your company's operations.

For exporters, there are at least four major steps in the planning cycle.

Define current business status. This involves the preparation of a comprehensive and detailed summary of all the relevant aspects of your current operations.

Determine corporate strategy. From the information gathered in the above step, you can identify ways of improving your company's performance and build these into your export plan.

Assess international competitiveness. Once you've completed your corporate strategy, you can use the results to identify promising international business opportunities.

Establish your export plan. Upon identifying one or more promising ventures, incorporate these into your overall corporate strategy.

Now, you should have a viable export plan upon which to pursue marketing and selling your product or service abroad. Once your plan is completed, adjustments to it need not be time consuming. The plan, however, should be flexible enough to incorporate ongoing revisions and adjustments quickly.

THE TRIAL RUN

For new exporters, it is always a good idea to test the waters with a trial run. By following these steps you can test the viability of your export venture and, at the same time, review all of the points presented in *The Exporter's Guide*.

Market Selection

Most new Canadian exporters start with the United States market because of its proximity and familiarity. While there are advantages to this approach, once you have demonstrated your