

KEY STEPS TOWARD EXPORTING SUCCESS IN THE U.S.

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The most useful information for small businesses that want to export to the United States is usually gathered directly from people who have first-hand knowledge of the market and the industry. The list of people to interview should include distributors, potential clients, suppliers of components, editors of specialized publications, government officials familiar with your industry, and U.S. producers who do not perceive you as a threat.

The United States is also one of the few places in the world where detailed and sophisticated information can be gathered over the telephone. Americans are usually willing to share information over the telephone if they sense that you know the industry and if they feel that they can also learn something from the conversation.

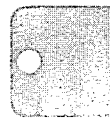
Be aware of the biases of your informers. Sincere and otherwise well-informed insiders may have misconceptions about the market. Confident entrepreneurs, for instance, tend to draw conclusions on overall market trends on the basis of their firms' own performance. Remember that confident people rarely admit to their weaknesses in a telephone interview. After talking to many people, you will develop a sense of who are the most reliable informers. Obtaining opinions and estimates from as many different persons as possible is the best way to protect yourself against biases.

Calling or even visiting a number of potential customers will give you a wealth of valuable information. You will get to know the business of your future customers, get reactions to your product, and obtain first-hand information on your competitors.

Although business associates such as distributors are good sources of information, you should not rely entirely on them. They may also have biases and their interests may be slightly different from yours. You need to generate your own market information in order to negotiate with your associates and to assess objectively their performance.

Visiting a trade show will be useful in gathering information on competing products and making contacts in the industry. It is preferable to wait until after you have gathered market information and developed a strategy before exhibiting your own products at a trade show.

"Where to Find Assistance" lists a number of sources of information and assistance that can help you prepare your export program.



Key sources of market information

- statistical and market studies available from governments, trade associations and private firms
- trade magazines and their editors
- distributors
- suppliers
- potential clients
- government officials
- U.S. producers

STEP 2

MAKING CALCULATED DECISIONS

Successful exporters use market information to make decisions about products, target markets, distribution and pricing. Making sound business choices will give a clear direction to your firm's efforts in the United States. Always make sure to consider all options. If you do not feel confident enough about a decision, take more time, gather additional information, or consult an expert.

The Right Product

Most small businesses exporting to the United States emphasize product characteristics over price competitiveness. Products most successfully marketed by Canadian small businesses in the past emphasized unique characteristics over