

# FIRST STEPS IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETING



***To say that the Internet has revolutionised international trade over the last decade is to understate its importance. Thanks to the Internet, where once only substantial corporations were able to venture, now virtually anyone with something to sell and a computer has access to a world-wide market.***

Direct access to overseas purchasers has delivered the means for smaller companies to prosper from international trade like never before. But as more and more companies get involved, buyers are becoming more discerning, and the competition more aggressive. In response, you need to up your marketing game. But more than that, to achieve success in reaching out to potential buyers in new and unfamiliar territories, you'll need to be keenly aware of how their market differs from your own, their expectations and the potential stumbling blocks to effective communication.

Business depends on effective communication to be able to thrive. Naturally, language is an important element in the communication process but it is by no means the only one. Of equal importance to what you say, is how you say it – the way that you express or emphasise certain ideas about your company, your products and the way you do business can have a crucial impact on whether your message is well received or trashed out of hand.

The first step is to make sure you really understand your market, and more importantly, the needs of the potential customers you are talking to. For example, is it a price-sensitive market where the most important consideration is cost? Or is quality or good service the key factor in purchase decisions? Don't assume that an overseas market will have the same priorities and needs as your domestic one. A fashion item might sell well in Europe because it's cheap; the same item might be popular in Asia because its European style differentiates it from locally-produced competitors.

Approaching your market for the first time, you need to come across as credible and trustworthy. Nothing destroys that impression faster than poorly-written or ill-conceived

communications. Be aware of the cultural sensitivities of your target audience; language which might come across in your own culture as friendly and affable might well be considered highly inappropriate in your target region. First time visitors to the UK from Japan are frequently shocked by the over-familiarity of shop assistants; likewise visitors to Japan are often bewildered by the extreme courtesy they receive in shops and restaurants. For this reason, it's vital to ensure the language of your initial pitch expresses your ideas clearly and appropriately. If you have any doubt, use a professional translator.

The method of delivery is also important. Email is a cheap and effective way of reaching a large audience, but used indiscriminately it becomes hugely damaging to your reputation as a trustworthy supplier. Do not be tempted to conduct spam campaigns - particularly if you are approaching European or US markets. Spam is universally loathed and you will do your reputation far more damage than good by using it.

It is important to realise that in a market where you have no existing presence, the only information a potential customer has about you is what you send them or what they can find out online. Reputation and a clear statement of business ethics are therefore essential marketing assets which must be expressed throughout the whole of your corporate communications strategy - not just your sales pitch.

Business today is a global affair. The opportunities for even small companies are boundless. By adapting to the new global business culture; learning to speak its language, its customs and to communicate well, even modest enterprises can enjoy unprecedented international sales success.

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## Some things to think about when planning your international marketing strategy

- 1. Communicate effectively.** To make that vital good first impression, you need to come across clearly. While minor language problems are not generally an issue once you have a relationship with a customer, don't rely on in-house translations for your initial approach. Remember, it's not just a case of getting the words right; the message and delivery has to be correct, too. If you are not 100 percent confident, use a professional translator for your initial marketing pitch material.
- 2. Recognise the importance of reputation management.** The only information a potential customer has about you is what you send them and what they can find online. What will they find? Does it give a fair reflection of your abilities and credibility? Before embarking on your international marketing, is it worth hiring someone to critique your marketing communications and online presence?
- 3. Don't be tempted to use indiscriminate e-mail campaigns.** Don't trust suppliers in the U.S. or Europe who offer to sell you bone-fide lists of opt-in business subscribers; they are invariably frauds. If you want to use e-mail as part of your marketing, do so through a reputable agency who can help ensure your message is going to the right people and is presented in a way that's not going to damage your reputation.
- 4. Use every opportunity to build online reputation.** Become an accredited supplier on global trade websites or join an international trade organisation. Seek positive news coverage in the trade magazines popular in the regions that you are interested in.
- 5. Use social media.** Services like Facebook and LinkedIn are becoming increasingly popular as a way of networking internationally, giving you the opportunity to establish personal relationships with potential sources of information and contacts. A company blog, if well written, can be an excellent way to illustrate the positive core values of your business. PR companies can be hired to write and manage the content for you.
- 6. Understand your market.** The importance of doing your background research cannot be overstated. Who are your competitors? What tactics do they use? Do you understand the relevance of your product to the market? Are you sure you know what buyers are looking for? If you have any doubts, it may save you a great deal of time and money to commission some market research to come up with the answers.
- 7. Understand the business culture of your target market.** One of the biggest errors that can be made is assuming that people do business in the same way you do. If in doubt, seek advice before devising your marketing strategy.

## ABOUT EIDO PUBLIC RELATIONS

Eido PR is a specialist technical PR and industrial marketing agency that can help you connect with new customers in the UK, Europe and Asia. We have extensive direct experience in engineering and industry, allowing us to write about technical topics clearly and with real credibility.

We offer a wide range of consultancy and marketing services and we'd be delighted to talk to you about your needs and how we can help you achieve success. Please visit our website [www.eido-pr.eu](http://www.eido-pr.eu) for more information,

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