

Grow your business – Export to the world

For many small business owners, taking your goods and services to overseas markets can be a highly effective way to expand your business. If you find that you are increasingly reliant on shrinking local markets, exporting can be a profitable and rewarding exercise.

But what do you do once you've taken the decision to enter international markets? How do you go about marketing your product in a country where it is unknown, and competing with other products with different pricing structures and varying levels of quality?

It's difficult to know where to start, but research is the key. Successful exporting doesn't happen by accident – it needs careful planning and commitment. Understanding and preparing for risks associated with exporting before you get started can be crucial.

To begin your export planning for success, you need to look closely at the legal and political risks that might be associated with particular countries. Then there are quarantine and customs issues, and not insignificant matter of financing your new venture. You should also be aware of other exporting issues including international intellectual property protection, foreign exchange and shipping. Also research how Australia's Free Trade Agreements can affect your export business.

The good news is that there are plenty of resources around to help potential exporters. Both federal and state governments have export assistance services that can help you to develop an export plan, advise you on how to realise your export potential, and in some circumstances, partially fund your project.

A good place to begin your research is at www.business.gov.au, which can lead you to much of the information you'll need to get started. To get you started, here are a few resources:

- You can promote your business overseas by registering on Austrade's Australian Suppliers Directory. This directory contains a list of Australian companies, products and services targeted at overseas buyers. Visit www.austrade.gov.au/asd.
- A range of assistance programs for exporters is available from state and federal government agencies. Visit business.gov.au for more information on grants that may apply to your exporting business.
- Exporting online can be a cost-effective way of entering the overseas market. Online tools commonly used to market internationally include websites, e-mail, e-marketplaces and collaboration tools. For more information on these, visit www.exportingonline.gov.au.

For more information on all these exporting issues, visit business.gov.au. You can also download the *Growing your business checklist* which covers Exporting and a range of other growing topics by visiting www.business.gov.au/checklist. Start your exporting business success today!