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Want to Export but Have Cold Feet?

An Export Management Consultant May Be Able to Help

Large companies often trade globally via their own corporate presence overseas, or the reliance on an international partner network. Small and medium-sized businesses, on the other hand, sometimes do not have the know-how or resources to develop their international business. What is the solution for these companies? The core value Export Management Consultants (EMC) provide is to allow companies to focus on manufacturing and the US market, while their partner EMC develops their international business for them.

EMCs are approached for a variety of reasons. “Typically, companies get a foreign contact wanting to do business. Usually the owner or sales manager, with no experience doing international business, will handle overseas markets,” Chris Harris of CH Trade (based in Fargo) said. They may not know all the rules and regulations that go into conducting international business. Aside from that, “It is more cost effective for a small- to medium-sized company who cannot afford to have an in-house international department,” Betsy Olim of Olim International, based in Tennessee, said. “You would have to go down a pretty rocky road of learning and mistakes,” Harris said. “Whereas someone who works with us is instantly getting a foot up because we have years of experience of managing markets around the world. We have navigated differences in culture, time zones, politics, legal structure, language, and shipping – there is a lot of stuff that you have to be prepared for when you are doing international business.”

What do EMCs do on a given day? It varies. Olim describes her typical day as acting like the “International Department” for her clients. Whether it is answering sales leads, assisting with pricing requests, or putting out fires, she does all things international for her clients. Michel Locquegnies of Mark-Tech International LLC, based in Minneapolis, said simply, “There is no typical day.” Last year, he went to four trade shows across Europe to find contacts for his clients. While in the office, he often does market research. Though there is no typical day, “That is part of the fun.”



Halverson Wood Products, in conjunction with Michel Locquegnies, exhibited at Agritechnica 2019 and made many worldwide connections.

But it is not simply the knowledge and expertise of international markets that they offer, but a breadth of services tailored to every one of their clients. Locquegnies has, among other services, LandingPad, which is used by foreign firms to enter the American marketplace. He also does personal, one-on-one CEO and/or staff training for working in international business. One of Olim’s many services is analyzing the efficiency of a company’s export program to find sources of inefficiency to improve the overall logistical structure of the

client. Harris uses his ViPER methodology for creating an export plan: Vision, Planning, Execution, and Review.

Though Export Management Consultants work with mix of clients, they do often have industry specialties. Olim's are Green Building and Waste-to-Energy, biomass, renewable technologies, and eco-industrial park projects. Chris Harris, being headquartered in Fargo, specializes in agricultural machinery. Locquegnies sees many clients with Industrial products, including commercial, agricultural, or construction industries. He also works with a lot of technological products – whether it is hardware or software. Collectively, they have worked in many, many sectors over the years as diverse as diving equipment, cooking oils, and smartphone apps.

They gave a variety of tips for exporters on best practices. "What is important is careful research on the front end, particularly with regard to qualifying potential dealers, distributors, and buyers. Unfortunately, there are many fraudulent players on the world stage." Olim said. A simple tip Harris would advise any company is to be ready to say "No." Don't try to and hope that a bad plan will work itself out - it's not going to happen. I think it is important to visit your region regularly, too. I think that face-to-face contact is critical. Being on the premises or in the customer's premises, working with the customers directly, is invaluable. With that, you have one hundred percent of their bandwidth," said Harris



Chris Harris and the CH Trade team entertaining their Czech and Polish Resellers in Europe.

One trend Locquegnies sees is, "Companies are going more and more to an end-user. One client I have worked with realized that it was better to go to end users when they learned that most distributors aren't actually selling anything." Overall, it is "more and easier access to resources that help get work done. The global economy is maturing."

Through the varied services from training to market research spanning diverse industries from smartphone apps to medical devices to agricultural machinery, Export Management Consultants aid many American companies in the global marketplace.



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