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**Going Global:
How to Succeed
in International
Markets**



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Companies contemplating taking the leap into the global marketplace may feel there is too much information to digest on this topic and feeling overwhelmed, they may decide to keep their business planted firmly in their domestic market. However, the information below is easy-to-read, tailored to companies contemplating venturing beyond their own borders, and will provide potential for numerous benefits as you enter the global marketplace.

If you are considering taking your product or service global but can't decide if the benefits are worth the risks, then keep reading. Global trade and international business holds numerous opportunities for your company if you are willing to take the time to learn how to adequately prepare for and then enter foreign markets. This is especially true considering the fact that many of the barriers to these opportunities have been decreasing in recent years, as evidenced by the number of major companies that have their roots in Europe or Asia, but also have successful North American branches, including Sony, Samsung, Reebok, and Volkswagen. All of these companies have proved extremely successful in their international endeavours. Further, more and more people around the world are making online purchases from companies that aren't even located in their own country.

TIP! *Pay attention to the culture and local customs of your customers.*

Nike made a costly error in the late 1990s when they used flames to depict the word “Air” as the logo on their “Nike Air” running shoes. Unfortunately for Nike, this symbol looked very similar to the Arabic word for “Allah.” Due to the offense this caused to many Muslims, Nike had to remove thousands of pairs of shoes from the marketplace, as well as work hard to repair the damaged relationship with their alienated customers.

But what does “going global” really entail? If you make the decision to enter foreign markets, you should be aware that it will probably involve changes to your business strategy and goals, including how your company conducts its marketing and interacts with customers. In extending your business’ reach into international markets, your company may simply take your current product or service and sell them in additional countries where English is also spoken. In this case, it is probable that only a few changes would have to be made to your marketing strategies and production.

If there is a demand for your product or service in countries where English is not spoken, however, such as in many emerging markets throughout the developing world, then you must be prepared to make certain changes so that your product will be accepted in a market where there is numerous language, cultural, business, political, and legal differences. If you carefully consider these differences, then you have a much better chance of avoiding marketing mistakes that other companies have made, many of which caused them significant embarrassment and loss of sales. For example, Nike made a costly error in the late 1990s when they used flames to depict the word “Air” as the logo on their “Nike Air” running shoes. Unfortunately for Nike, this symbol looked very similar to the Arabic word for “Allah.” Due to the offense this caused to many Muslims, Nike had to remove thousands of pairs of shoes from the marketplace, as well as work hard to repair the damaged relationship with their alienated customers.

This leads to one of the most important rules when entering international markets. If you remember nothing else, simply remember this: “Pay attention to the culture and local customs of your customers.” This philosophy will help you to seize international business opportunities and increase sales rather than offending potential customers and damaging your international reputation.

Part 1 – Entering the Global Marketplace

Exporting your product and service – taking your business global – can be challenging due to the variety of potential differences in culture, political and economic environments, and regulations between your domestic market and your overseas target markets. When done properly, however, taking your business global can carry with it numerous benefits including new opportunities and increased sales. The following outlines helpful tips, information, and advice to successfully expand into international markets and to make your efforts at globalization more effective, affordable, and timely.

Before you “Go Global”

- Make sure you understand the markets you are planning to enter before you spend the money for new websites and localized content. If you plan on entering the Japanese market, then it would serve you well to visit Japan, meet with businesses and potential clients, and familiarize yourself (at least a little bit) with the language and culture.
- Conduct extensive research in order to find the best market for your product or service. Does your target market already have what you are selling, or is there a need for your product or service that you can fill? What about the culture, regulations, and business requirements of your target market? This research will help you minimize any possible risks and will ultimately save you time, money, and energy in the long-run. The two main types of research include:
 - Secondary market research – gather information from public sources including books, newspapers, market reports and studies, and the Internet. For market and industry information related to exporting, please see the Exporters section of the Canadian Border Services Agency website at <http://cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/export/menu-eng.html>.
 - Primary market research – communicate directly with experts, customers, and other important sources of information in order to fill in any gaps after you have conducted secondary research.

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- After completing extensive research, choose an environment (i.e. culture, country, or sector) that is friendly to entrepreneurs and small businesses looking to expand.
- Identify potential areas that may create risks or impact your efforts in entering and succeeding overseas, including the local legal practices of your target market, any restrictive trade policies, the political environment, and the time and distance it will take you to ship your products.
- After assessing possible risks, access government agencies and/or companies that offer tools and resources to help you mitigate those risks.
- Attend trade shows and visit online trade sites relevant to your industry and use these events and resources as an opportunity to network, make contacts, and begin to develop relationships with potential overseas partners and clients.
- Carefully produce a well-researched export plan that includes:
 - Description of your company and its market and industry; your business goals and objectives; product and services information and description; analysis of the target market you desire to enter, along with future trends and predictions; comparison of your company’s strengths and weaknesses in relation to your competition; strategies for international marketing; and financial information and budgets (Team Canada).
- Prepare a financial plan and look into the financing options available to assist you with the initial costs associated with exporting.
- Before you export your products or services to other countries, contact your country’s consulate or embassy in the market that you would like to enter in order to access valuable market data and directories of potential buyers for particular industries.
- Take an on-line course, workshop, or college course on international marketing, cross-cultural communication, global management, or some other area related to international business that would help you meet your particular business goals and aspirations.

In the Beginning...

- Hire a professional translator. This will ensure that you achieve linguistic and conceptual equivalence in your web content and advertising, thereby avoiding costly mistakes that have the potential to offend or alienate your customers in other countries.
- Start small – don't feel that you have to translate your entire website into numerous languages all at once at the beginning of your efforts to "go global."
 - Consider starting with one or two languages that have the greatest potential for success for your company (based on market research) and possibly only translating parts of your website that your customers have frequent interaction with, including the home page, product information, customer service, and FAQs.
- Investigate potential suppliers, first online and then meet with them for a face-to-face meeting and a tour of their factory.
- Focus on building and maintaining long-term relationship through patience, persistence, sensitivity, courtesy, regular contact, and respect for their culture and business norms.
- Try to approach new situations with questions and an open mind rather than assumptions and judgments.
- Develop a global mindset in order to be able to tap into lucrative opportunities many other domestic-focused businesses miss and be able to better understand both your competitors and customers. Some of these tips include:
 - Increase your global awareness knowledge, and competency – Travel, watch international news, and read international blogs and articles.
 - Increase your global network of contacts - Get to know foreigners and ex-pats in your community, eat at foreign food restaurants, and join online networking sites where you can connect with people overseas.
 - Develop Global Skills - Learn a new language, join an international club or group, and travel overseas.

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Part II – Advertising and Marketing in the Global Marketplace

One of the most important aspects of taking your business global is effectively advertising to potential customers in your target market. Unless they know what sets your product or service apart from competitors and how they can benefit from purchasing from you, then they won't buy. The following section discusses numerous ways to conduct effective advertising and marketing campaigns.

Advertising and Brand Consistency: Why are Some Brands so Hard to Resist?

According to Izabela Lundberg of *Global Entrepreneurs*, effective and eye-catching branding is determined by more than how much you spend on your advertising budget and your business' brand is more than your logo, brand name, or colourful ads. The implicit promise that you make to your customers through your advertising is also hugely important in building a successful brand and faithful following. It is therefore imperative that you are consistent and clear with your advertising. Some tips on creating an irresistible, consistent, and eye-catching brand include:

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1) Determine your target market

- Focus on connecting with potential customers in your target market and providing them with the best products and services possible.
- Rather than “trying to be all things to all people” it is important that you narrow down your target market and determine specifically who you want to reach through asking yourself questions such as “Where does my ideal customer live?”; “What do they do in their spare time?”; “What is their income?”; “What is their style?”; “What is their age range?”; and “What is important to them?”
- Use this exercise to determine the characteristics, wants, and needs of your ideal customer.
- Once you know your ideal customer, you will be better able to focus your time and money on sales and marketing strategies designed specifically to reach those people.

2) Keep the focus on your customers

- Highlight your business and what you offer, while at the same time clearly show your customers what they will gain and the benefits they will receive if they buy your product or service. This also shows you understand their unique needs and value the time and money they spend.
 - Example: “When you buy dresses from us, you will receive benefits including lower costs, helpful sales staff, high-quality merchandise, and less hassle and time spent searching for that perfect outfit for your big night.”

3) Always keep your promises. If you can't follow through, then don't make the promise.

- As noted above, your brand is your promise to your customers. If you let down your customers after you have made a promise, then your business and brand will suffer.
- Focus on maximizing your existing strengths, show your customers what makes you different from the competition, and then deliver on any promises you make. Put simply, in order to ensure your branding efforts and advertising strategies are successful in the long-run you must be consistently providing excellent products and services for your customers.

4) Create a strong brand strategy

- It is important that you create your brand strategy before hiring designers and writers, building your websites, or crafting your marketing campaign. If you develop a strong brand strategy first, then you will be able to make all of your other important decisions with this strategy in mind (thereby saving money) and you will be able to fully articulate what you want your designers, writers, websites, and marketing to communicate and to whom.

5) Success is in the details.

- All visual, verbal, and experiential customer “touch points” should accurately and consistently convey your brand.

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6) Quality Design

- First impressions matter. The colors, shapes, and fonts that you use communicate something about your company and brand.
- If you do not have the necessary skills and tools, be sure to hire a designer who is able to create content that will stand out among your competitors while also keeping in mind your target audience and the personality and message you want to communicate.

Successful International Marketing all Starts with a Plan

Your plan for entering foreign target markets must be different from your domestic marketing strategy due to the variations in the culture, customs, language, and needs of your customers and potential customers. It is important that you determine your business' unique reasons for wanting to export and be able to clearly articulate your objectives. This will help determine the level of influence that your exporting endeavours will impact the direction of your business and strategies.

To formulate an effective international marketing plan, it is important that you begin with detailed market research regarding demographics, as well as the need and level of demand for your product or service in a particular area. It is also important to recognize and appreciate cultural differences and nuances in your website and content localization efforts, as well as your advertising and marketing strategies. Further, to increase the chances that your international marketing plan will be successful, it is important that you place someone in charge of its implementation. This person should be closely involved in all stages of the process of developing the international marketing plan, have the authority to make decisions, and possess sufficient resources to take the plan from paper to reality.

Part III – Increasing Web Traffic, Visibility, and Online Success in the Global Marketplace

This final section will focus more specifically on increasing your online visibility and traffic, thereby attracting more potential customers to your website and ultimately leading to increased sales and a larger customer base in more countries:

1) Search Engine Optimization

- Whether or not people can easily find your website through search engines can make all the difference in the success or failure of any online business venture. Be aware, however, that achieving a high ranking on Google is usually going to take a lot of time and effort. You cannot buy a top spot from Google or any other major search engine; you must work for your ranking.
- Since many business owners and managers do not have the necessary time to devote to this process, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) consultants are often hired.

2) Advertise with Search Engines through Pay-Per-Click Marketing, such as Google's AdWords

- Create your own ads and choose keywords or phrases related to your business.
- When people use one of your keywords for a Google search, your ad might show up next to the search results. This means that your ad is reaching a more targeted audience that is already searching for something you sell.
- People then have the option of clicking on your ad to make a purchase or learn more about your company – either way you have attracted new visitors to your site.
- The great part about AdWords is that you only pay if people click on your ads (not when your ad is displayed) and there is no minimum amount of time to commit or money to spend.
- Google also provides information about keywords traffic so that you can make well-informed decisions about the keywords you select for your ads.

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3) Exchange Links with other (Relevant) Websites

- In this way, you will profit from the other company's efforts to generate traffic and they will benefit from yours. It is a mutually beneficial arrangement.

4) Keywords

- Before writing content for your site, conduct research into the keywords and phrases that potential customers are using since the choice of terms will make a huge difference in whether or not people find your ad or website.
 - Example: choosing the correct terminology for a laptop based on the desired target market. In Portuguese, a portable computer is called 'computador portátil.' This term can be translated into English as a notebook computer or a portable computer. According to Huiping Iler, owner and President of wintranslation, there were over 800,000 searches on Yahoo in one month for "notebook computer." Conversely, the term "portable computer" failed to yield even 3,000 searches.
- Choose terms that generate high traffic and have as little competition as possible.
- A great site to analyze the web traffic and key words for your company and compare it to competitors is www.alexacom.com.

5) Technical Issues

- Create and use different websites for each country you plan on entering. For each of these websites, use the top-level domains in that country. For example, a .ca domain will result in the highest rankings for your Canadian website, while in China a .cn domain will be best.
- If the country you are entering has more than one dominant language spoken, then it is best to use subdomains so that visitors do not have to switch back and forth between languages.
- Invest in software or programs where you can track and analyze your website statistics before you begin revamping your website for new markets. Use these resources to determine the country of origin and the internet service providers being used to access your website. This information can help you make well-informed decisions when it comes

to taking your business global and determine which markets you should enter, the languages you should translate your website, and even the amount of localization necessary for your business at this time.

6) Web Content and Structure

- Regularly provide unique, relevant, interesting, and updated content. This will demonstrate to potential customers that you take an active interest in the market they are in, as well as their unique needs.
- Develop and operate a high-quality, localized website.
- Your website should be easy to navigate, functional, and convenient to use. Frustration and an inability to find desired content will chase potential customers away quite quickly.
- Take the time necessary to research and create original, creative, and well-written online content and ads.
- Develop your website and public relations materials with your target audience in mind, so that you are providing specific and pertinent information and resources to the people you desire to reach. Think quality rather than quantity.

Conclusion: Next Steps

Though it is true that successfully entering the global marketplace can be challenging, complex, and time-consuming, there are also numerous benefits attached to “going global.” These benefits include increased sales, additional customers from countries all over the world, the improvement of your international image, and accessing opportunities that many businesses miss because they stubbornly refuse to consider the international market due to a perception that it is “too risky.” However, entering the global marketplace is no more risky than expanding your business domestically; the risks are just different and they require the necessary research, preparation, and commitment.

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About wintranslation

wintranslation is a professional translation company based in Ontario, Canada. It has been serving clients across North America in over 100 languages since it was established in 1998. wintranslation's services include document translation, glossary development, foreign language keyword research, translator/copywriter selection and recruitment, multilingual desktop publishing and website quality assurance testing.

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