



Think Global!

Five useful resources to help you export your products or services

By Susan Baka

If the prospect of growing your business globally sounds daunting, fear no more. There is quite literally a world of opportunity that awaits you – something that too few women entrepreneurs are pursuing. Selling your products or services internationally can actually be easier than you may think – if you do your homework and take advantage of the available resources, many designed specifically for women business owners.

So, where do you start?

Step 1

Check out www.infoexport.gc.ca/businesswomen. If you are new to the international trade game and want to determine if you are export ready and find out how other women have successfully expanded into new markets around the world, visiting this site is an excellent launching point. There are plenty of tips from successful women exporters as well as resources, tools and contacts that can help you.

Step 2

Contact your Regional Office of the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service. Canada's trade commissioners represent a wealth of information you can tap into to do your market research. For more information, call toll-free at 1-888-811-1119 or visit www.infoexport.gc.ca.

Step 3

Register with the Virtual Trade Commissioner. Visit www.infoexport.gc.ca and click on Virtual Trade Commissioner to register. You will get free information about your sector and countries of interest as well as notices of trade missions. Your company will also be included in the database used by trade commissioners around the world when they are sourcing Canadian companies interested in doing business abroad.

Step 4

Join the Organization of Women in International Trade (OWIT). OWIT-Toronto is the first Canadian chapter of a worldwide organization dedicated to advancing global trade opportunities for women. It facilitates women's entry and expansion into the global marketplace in a variety of ways, including: providing networking opportunities through its events and resources to help members build a strong network of private sector and government contacts – locally, domestically and internationally – both face-to-face and virtually; organizing seminars and workshops to enhance exporting skills and keep members current on international issues; providing practical tips and resources related to trade and profiling member success stories through its newsletters and Web site (www.owit-toronto.ca); and initiating or supporting trade missions to introduce members to new markets and valuable contacts.

OWIT-Toronto serves as a forum for women to mentor other women members about international trade. This happens both formally, through its workshops and roundtables, as well as informally when members connect, provide support and leads, and sometimes even do business with each other. Membership also gives you access to the networking benefits of the parent organization (www.owit.org), which hosts an annual international conference that attracts members from the 30 chapters around the world.



Step 5

Participate in a trade mission. Trade missions are an excellent way to research new markets and to get introduced to valuable international contacts that are so key to success.

Although the global arena presents endless opportunities for business growth, women have historically been underrepresented – only 9% are exporters. But women who have taken the leap onto the international stage are reaping the benefits. By tapping into the resources mentioned here, you too can take your business to a whole new level!

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