

Found in translation

As Wisconsin businesses seek creative ways to navigate the economic downturn, growing their customer bases through exports is becoming a high priority. Expanding a business outside the U.S. can reap economic benefits if it's done in a responsible way. Assessing your readiness to export, developing an export plan and preparing your written materials for translation are activities to consider before you export.



Among the major industries in Wisconsin are transportation equipment and machinery manufacturing, health care devices and software, agriculture, dairy products, food production, paper manufacturing and tourism. For each of these industries, a significant opportunity exists for exporting.

In the area of manufacturing, a Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership (WMEP) survey found that next generation manufacturing being done in Wisconsin is enabling local businesses to compete and excel on an international stage. Study results indicate that Wisconsin manufacturing companies can better compete globally through continual improvements, innovations and

enhancements to production and products as well as listening to customers' needs.

In 2007, Wisconsin exported to 209 foreign destinations, primarily to Canada where Wisconsin posted exports of \$5.9 billion, 31 percent of the state's total export shipments. Currently, the Census Bureau reports that Wisconsin's top three trading partners are Canada, Mexico and China.

One way to judge the viability of entering the export market is to look at how well your sales are doing in the U.S. If your sales are doing well in the domestic market, you'll likely find customers in the global marketplace. Consider also the features of your product and whether your product is difficult to find outside the U.S. and in your target markets.

When your company has decided it is ready to export, begin by writing your export plan. In it, define which of your products you will export and whether you will need to modify your goods for sale in the target country.

Becoming familiar with the legal and regulatory requirements for your target markets can help your company save time and money and minimize the risk that you may violate local or international laws. For example, you may need to ensure that appropriate conformance statements appear in your product manuals or that your documents are translated into the language used in your target markets.

Regulatory requirements in such countries as Canada, Mexico and China require that labels of products, ingredients, warnings and use instructions be written in the target language. To meet such requirements and satisfy customer needs, Wisconsin businesses who wish to expand their global base in a responsible way must streamline their translation process in order to gain market share.

When you are ready to translate, make sure that you design and write documents for a global audience. For example, use short, clear sentences, eliminate informal vocabulary that may not translate across languages well and leave enough white space on your pages to compensate for foreign-language text expansion.

Another activity that will make your content easier to translate — and that will ultimately save your company money in translation costs — is to use easily understood icons and illustrations. Eliminate narrow columns that may lead to excessive hyphenation or awkward line breaks in some languages, especially German. Include both English and metric measurements, and double-check the metric conversions for accuracy. To further streamline the translation process, compile glossaries of your product's key terms, and share those glossaries with your translation agency's project manager. In addition, spell out company specific acronyms in your glossary as even experienced translators appreciate assistance with arcane terminology.

By thoroughly assessing your readiness to export, developing a detailed export plan, creating your documentation so that it is translation ready and ensuring that your translations are professionally done, your export initiatives can succeed and your business can thrive internationally. **CRM**

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