

# 10 Tips for International Trade

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## SBDC LEAD CENTER:

### LONG BEACH COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

(866) 588-SBDC

[www.smallbizla.org](http://www.smallbizla.org)

## SBDC/CITD: CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE DEVELOPMENT

(562) 938-5018

<http://longbeach.citd.org>

**Are you thinking of doing business internationally? Exporting your products overseas exposes you to a whole new world of customers. Here are 10 tips for taking your business global.**

1. **Start small.** To begin, pinpoint one country that has a strong demand for your product, well-established transportation methods and a good banking system. Unless you're fluent in another language, it's easiest to start with an English-speaking country.
2. **Do your homework.** Market research is essential to understanding the culture, business practices, legal issues, competitors and consumers in the foreign market you're trying to enter.
3. **Consider ecommerce.** If you want to sell direct to international consumers, online sales are a simple place to start. Your website should welcome international customers and clearly state which countries you ship to.
4. **Choose the right partners.** Depending on your goals, you may need agents, distributors, bankers, freight forwarders, brokers and other strategic partners to export successfully. Do your due diligence on each company and be sure you feel comfortable with the relationship before proceeding.
5. **Nurture strong relationships.** Keep in regular communication with your overseas partners and give them the same attention you give U.S. vendors or distributors. Email has made international communication easier, but you'll still need to talk by phone and visit in person from time to time.
6. **Ensure payment.** Your business bank's international trade department can help you check references for an overseas customer, choose the best payment methods and take the appropriate steps to ensure you get paid.
7. **Be flexible.** You may need to adjust your products, services, marketing materials and sales practices to fit local customs, preferences or regulations. Listen to your foreign partners' suggestions and be ready to make changes as needed.
8. **Speak their language.** Although English is often touted as the international language of business, there are still many potential customers who don't speak English. Be sure your advertising, sales and promotional materials are translated into the language/s that will reach the most customers.
9. **Make a commitment.** Exporting offers great rewards, but only if you invest the appropriate time, effort and resources in a long-term commitment. If you look at exporting as a backup plan, focusing on overseas markets only when your U.S. sales slump, you are less likely to succeed.
10. **Get help.** Experts such as those at your local Small Business Development Center can put your business on the road to international success by helping you with everything from financing to finding trade partners.

### By Rieva Lesonsky

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