

10 Tips for International Trade

CALIFORNIA SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS:

**NORTHERN CA
REGIONAL NETWORK**
Humboldt State University
Serving the Greater
San Francisco Bay Area
(707) 826-3920
www.norcalsbdc.org

**NORTHEASTERN CA
REGIONAL NETWORK**
CSU, Chico
Serving California
Northeast of Sacramento
(530) 898-5443
www.necsbdc.org

**CENTRAL CA
REGIONAL NETWORK**
UC Merced
Serving Central California
(559) 241-7414
http://sbdc.ucmerced.edu

**LOS ANGELES
REGIONAL NETWORK**
Long Beach Community
College District
Serving Los Angeles,
Ventura & Santa Barbara
Counties
(562) 938-5020
www.smallbizla.org

**ORANGE COUNTY /
INLAND EMPIRE
REGIONAL NETWORKS**
CSU Fullerton
Serving Orange,
San Bernardino &
Riverside Counties
(657) 278-2719
www.leadsbdc.org

**SAN DIEGO & IMPERIAL
REGIONAL NETWORK**
Southwestern Community
College District
Serving San Diego &
Imperial Counties
(619) 482-6388
www.growmybiz.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

Rieva Lesonsky is founder CEO of GrowBiz Media, a content and consulting company that helps entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses. Before launching her business, she was Editorial Director of Entrepreneur Magazine. Follow Rieva at [Twitter.com/Rieva](https://twitter.com/Rieva) and visit SmallBizDaily.com to sign up for her free TrendCast reports. Cesar Arellanes, Director of the Long Beach Center for International Trade Development (CITD), contributed to these tips.