

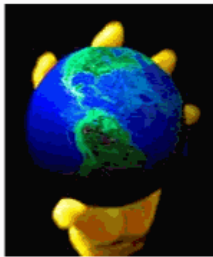


Growing your business

furthering your established business

Uncle Sam Wants You -- To Export

by [Stephanie Hoover](#)



If you're thinking about exporting, you've got friends in high places. The U.S. Departments of State and Commerce both stand at the ready with publications, advisors, and networking opportunities. The foreign trade division of the U. S. Census Bureau offers a treasure chest of statistical data. Even the more commonly recognized Small Business Administration is waiting to provide you with in-depth education and counseling. In all, 20 federal agencies participate in the U. S. Government's export promotions programs.

Why all this help? Exports mean growth for our country's economy. They largely contribute to the rise in the Gross National Product, lower the trade deficit, and created more than two million jobs in the last decade alone. And yet, according to the S.B.A., only a small percentage of potential exporters take advantage of global marketing opportunities.

If you've been intimidated by the idea of foreign markets, you need only call your regional Small Business Development Center or Department of Commerce District Office to overcome your fear. Chances are you will be lead by the hand toward resources instructing you how to create an international business plan, estimate exporting costs and projected revenues, compare financing alternatives, and determine methods of foreign entry.

Not to be outdone by their federal-level cousins, most states have created export bureaus or networks as well. In addition to technical know-how, these departments offer mentoring, market intelligence and financial assistance. Pennsylvania, for instance, has established an Office of International Business Development. Among its staff are experts who sort through the sea of state, federal, and multinational funding sources to match availability with an exporter's needs.

On the virtual front, exporters-to-be will find that government agencies have created a vast cyber-library covering issues as simple as "why should I consider exporting" to more specific queries like "what license do I need to sell computer software to Germany." USATrade.gov is an exhaustive springboard site administered by the U. S. Department of Commerce's Commercial Service. It offers easily navigable links to counseling services, market research, and trade events. Among its exporting resources links is the document "Basic Guide to Exporting," the most oft-referred-to treatise on exporting written to date.

If we can predict the enduring mantra for the 21st century, surely it must be "global marketing." Businesses of all sizes can participate in foreign trade, regardless of domestic sales figures. With the international market being four-times larger than the U. S. market, there are huge profits to be made. Of course, there are real costs and risks as well. Fortunately, taking advantage of the free information and education offered by the U. S. Government is not one of them.