



MIKE WILSON, CEO, *Go Exporting Ltd*

Website: <https://goexporting.com>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mikewilson-exportconsultant-goexporting>

At Go Exporting, we always stress the importance of building a detailed export plan and assessing all key elements, from market size to barriers to entry and risk. By taking the time to analyse and define your export strategy, you reduce the chances of making mistakes, increasing the odds of international success.

- Enterprise Connect Adviser to 157 companies 2008 - 2014
- Export mentoring and improvement programs 210 companies from 2015 to 2023

TIP 1. DEFINE YOUR OBJECTIVES

Be clear why you want to export and whether your organisation is ready for the challenge. Examine your motivations to export; What you are looking to achieve and over what period? Your attitude to risk; the resources you can allocate to export and the timeframe; will exporting affect your current business?

It is important to assess all these factors to be certain you are prepared for export before deciding on your next move.

TIP 2. PREPARE YOUR EXPORT READINESS ACTION PLAN

How prepared are you for export? Examine all aspects of your business: are your products/services ready; are you and your team prepared if an export order comes in tomorrow? Is everyone on board?

Perform a gap analysis between where you are now and where you need to be, then create an action plan to get you there within a defined timeframe.

TIP 3. WHERE TO EXPORT

How do you identify and assess the best markets?

- Assessing in-house data – where do you gain customers or enquiries?
- Learn from competitors – where are they active?
- Market research – find out as much as you can about the market, size, growth rate, trends.
- Barriers to Entry – assess the impact of all barriers to entry, such as approvals, competition, customs duty, transport costs, language, currency, payment terms.
- Take each element and give it a score. Build an overall rating for each country and compare to others.

TIP 4. FOCUS

Focus is key. Match your resources to your ambition.

You cannot be everywhere at once. Decide how many market(s) your organisation is ready to enter at the same time. Avoid stretching your business too thinly. Take the time to focus, gain a deeper understanding of the market and show potential customers you are committed to their country.

TIP 5. CHOOSE YOUR ROUTE(S) TO MARKET CAREFULLY

There are many options, such as: distributor, agent, recruitment, direct, online etc. Understand the differences, the positives and negatives of each option, to decide which is best for your business. The choice is not always clear so choose carefully. The wrong selection now could set you back years.

Find the best distributor, agent, employee or marketplace, whichever is your choice. Be patient and make the right decision.

TIP 6. ASSESS PRICING AND MARKET ENTRY VIABILITY

Be clear on the market pricing levels in your target market and the effect on your margins of your route to market choice.



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Check duties, transport costs, exchange fluctuations, compliance costs, local competition. Can you compete? Is it viable to enter the market?

Can you be at a higher price and create market share? Let your head rule your heart.

TIP 7. CREATE A BESPOKE INTERNATIONAL MARKETING PLAN

Marketing internationally may be different to at home. Digital marketing may be more/less effective, search terms will be in a different language, advertising mediums vary, is personal contact important? What are the important conferences/exhibitions?

Make sure your translations are correct. Be aware of cultural sensitivities. There are some big companies that got it wrong and paid the price.

TIP 8. DEFINE HOW YOU WILL IMPLEMENT YOUR PLAN

Who is going to lead your export drive? Someone needs to take responsibility and focus. Even if you use distributors, they need supporting and motivating. Avoid 'Touch & Go' selling where you start in a market but stop when you're needed elsewhere. New markets need to see your commitment, or else: why would they change from their usual suppliers? Ensure export customers are high priority.



TIP 9. COMPILE A DETAILED EXPORT PLAN

Define all the key elements in your plan:

- Required Resources – financial and non-financial.
- Timescale – How soon do you need export to be self-financing?
- Level of Risk – assess exposure and compare to attitude and to risk.
- Route to Market Strategy – Make the right choice and focus
- Milestones along the way – what you need to achieve, by when.
- Expected Outcomes - at each stage for up to 36 months.
- Share with stakeholders and colleagues. Get buy-in.

TIP 10. REVIEW AND REFINE

Don't just make a plan then stick it in the drawer never to be seen again. Use it to benchmark your progress. Is the strategy working? Were the assumptions correct? Don't make knee jerk reactions but be prepared to change tack if the indicators are consistently negative. Situations change. Markets change. Competition changes. Competition reacts. Be flexible. Be agile.

