

You Need More Than A Good Idea When Going Global



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It wasn't too long ago that the idea of going global with a business was reserved for the "big boys" - the Toyotas, IBMs and Coca Colas of the world. The Internet has certainly changed all that. Light up your web site and like it or not - ready or not - you're an international business.

Large or small, growing your business in Germany, Greece, Guam and anyplace else requires all the smart advance planning associated with starting a business right here in the United States... and then some.



The International Name
Game

Culture-sensitive market research is critical to expanding your overseas business reach. The market where you think you want to be doesn't exist in a deeply Americanized culture bubble. There are norms and taboos you couldn't imagine unless you enlist the help of someone who has been there... and done that.

Starbucks learned this the hard way when they launched their Gingerbread Latte drink in Germany. Plainly put, Germans don't called Gingerbread by it's uniquely American name. In Germany, Gingerbread is called "Lebkuchen." When Starbucks renamed the drink the Lebkuchen Latte, sales took off.

"If you are considering translating names, don't rely on computer translation," says Paul Williams, founder of the international branding company Idea Sandbox (www.idea-sandbox.com). "You don't want what you think is an effective name to mean something opposite or offend potential customers. "Work with someone locally who can help make sure you communicate what you intend."



When In China...

Your advertising, website, sale literature, memos, and business correspondence must be localized to your target overseas market. Organizations like the Association of Language Companies (www.alcus.org) can help you reach print and electronic media translation experts needed to create a more successful overseas presence.



How is Your Product Going To Get Where It Needs To Be?

You may remember from grade school that the quickest way from Point A to Point B is a straight line. Does the same hold true when the only way the tanning lotion you make in Miami has to go through the Bering Straits on its way to Thailand? Not exactly.

As an international business player, your reach extends as far your supply chain stretches. Don't think Brazil if you can't get your product there. Before furthering your reach into any market, tap into the shipping expertise of the shippers that can get your product where it needs to be, when it needs to be there.



Exchange Rates Are Just One of Several Financials Factors To Consider When Going Global

Going global is about dollars, Pesos, Euros, Kwanzas, Kunz, Kyats, Zlotes and then some. To grow your American business overseas, you need to develop a solid understanding of exchange rates between the U.S. and your chosen country, as well as the relative rates of inflation or deflation in both economies.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury Office of International Affairs most recent report to congress on International Economic and Exchange Rate Policies explains why an understanding of the real bilateral exchange rates between countries is critical to business planning for American companies doing business overseas.

Bilateral exchange rates take into account exchange rates and inflation rates between countries, giving an importer or exporter a more realistic income and expense picture than just a superficial assessment of exchange rates only.

	The federal government also runs an organization called the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (www.opic.gov) to help small and medium size American businesses gain financing for overseas business ventures.
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Reference

- Report to Congress on International Economic and Exchange Rate Policies
- [USA Today](http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/travel/2007-08-23-faux-pas_N.htm) [http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/travel/2007-08-23-faux-pas_N.htm]

Resource

- [Dun & Bradstreet](http://smallbusiness.dnb.com/manage/finances/12375462) [<http://smallbusiness.dnb.com/manage/finances/12375462>]
- [Overseas Private Investment Corporation](http://www.opic.gov/) [<http://www.opic.gov/>]
- Report to Congress on International Economic and Exchange Rate Policies

User Bio:

Jim Slaight is a graduate of the University of Florida. He started his career in television production, media relations and writing at IBM, later freelancing for Kawasaki motors, Science Screen Report and several other corporate clients.