
Promoting Exports to Europe Part 1.

In Europe as in any export market, one condition for export success is a long-term approach to marketing, including product promotion. Many companies in developing countries make only occasional attempts to sell products in Europe, often by participating in a trade fair on a national stand. They may make some sales, but find that orders are not repeated, or that what seems to be promising business eventually dwindles or simply stops.

The reason so many companies fail in the European market is that they are not committed to a long-term approach. They think only of making immediate sales, rather than building the foundations for a permanent presence in the market.

What does a long-term approach involve? It usually includes the following:

Seeking out and establishing solid relationships with agents or importers who can provide on-going representation and can actively



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promote sales and service to customers throughout the target market area.

- Maintaining these relationships by regular contact and personal visits.
- Calling on important customers with the representatives.
- Answering all inquiries promptly, and filling orders rapidly.
- Keeping up with market trends and buyers' requirements, and responding to them through product adaptation, for example.
- Establishing a price structure that is competitive and provides incentives to the trade, while of course still being profitable to the exporter, at least over the long run.

Supporting agents', importers' and distributors' sales promotion efforts through financial contributions, participating in trade fairs, supplying sales literature and so on.

All of this obviously requires exporters to place a high priority on their export business, and on spending money to build and maintain it. By starting small, concentrating at least initially on a limited number of priority markets and then gradually expanding their horizons as their export base grows, even small companies can develop a permanent, significant export business. But the commitment in time and money must be there.

Sales promotion literature

Perhaps the most important tool for promoting products in Europe, as in other export markets, is sales

literature, including simple letters.

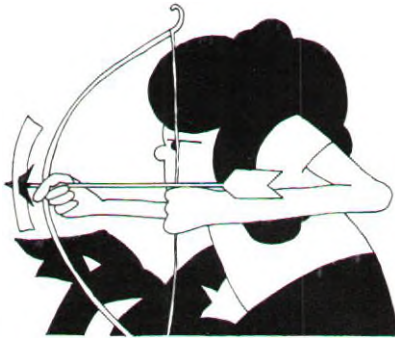
Sales literature can perform one or more of a variety of functions. These include:

- Introduce or create interest in your company
- Introduce or create interest in your products
- Provide a detailed description of your products
- Explain how to do business with your company
- Explain how to use your products
- Serve as a reference for use by your customers
- Create or reinforce favourable image of your company and its products.
- Stimulate inquiries
- Answer inquiries

Targeting your literature

Sales literature will be effective only if (1) your target readers have been identified and your specific objectives defined; (2) the literature has been prepared to achieve these objectives; and (3) it is effectively distributed to your target readers. If you do have specific purposes for producing literature, you should probably save the money and not produce it.

The most important rule for creating effective sales literature is to put yourself in the place of your target readers, the people you want to sell to or influence. This will help you to decide what to say and how to say it, and plan the appear



Sales literature should be targeted to the customers identified.

ance and format of your literature.

Business executives in Europe are busy people. They are not likely to spend a lot of time reading long brochures, certainly not unless they have good reason to. If they receive a piece of literature that does not immediately interest them, and if they have to hunt through a long text to find the information they need, they will probably throw it away immediately, without reading it.

This is one reason that sales promotion literature should generally be as brief as possible, and to the point. It should contain the information that really interests the type of target readers you are aiming at, and that encourages them to take the action you want them to take.

Types of sales literature

For a small company with a very limited product line, a single piece of sales promotion literature may be sufficient. In most cases this should be accompanied by an up-to-date price list. But many companies should really have a variety of pieces, each designed for different functions. The following are the types of literature

that a small company would probably find most useful and practical.

- a. The company brochure or leaflet
- b. Product leaflets and data sheets
- c. Catalogues
- d. Price lists
- e. Sales promotion letters

Design and production

European business people are used to sales literature of a high standard, in terms of design, illustrations, printing and paper. Anything of a lesser standard is likely to create negative impressions. So it is worth spending as much money as is needed to obtain the quality appropriate to the particular type of literature.

Distributing sales literature

No matter how good a piece of sales literature is, it will not help you unless it reaches your target audience. As already noted, literature is often handed directly to such people during sales visits and trade fairs, or enclosed in letters to established contacts or in response to inquiries.

But you may also want to seek new customers or representatives by mailing literature to a wider audience. This can become an expensive and highly wasteful operation unless you have targeted and updated mailing lists.

Sales trips

Face-to-face contact is usually the most effective form of selling. Even major industrial buyers like to know with whom they are dealing. Personal contact with buyers

or prospective representatives enable exporters to establish confidence and to answer questions about their products and their companies.

This is, of course, a two-way street. Exporters will also want to satisfy themselves about the seriousness and capabilities of their representatives, and to learn as much as they can about their customer's requirements and ways of doing business.

From time to time, exporters or prospective exporters may have the opportunity to travel to Europe as an exhibitor on their country's national stand at a trade air, or as a member of a trade mission. They should take full advantage of such opportunities by extending the trip to carry out their own sales promotion visits. Even so, a serious export effort will require more than just occasional visits to the market. Since travelling to and within Europe is expensive, trips should be planned carefully.

Below are suggestions for making the most of sales promotion trips to Europe:



Sales trips should be planned with specific objectives in mind.

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- Establish specific objectives for your visit.
 - Identify specific prospects or other people you should see, in advance.
 - Write in advance for appointments, and confirm them.
 - Bring samples along on each visit, if appropriate.
 - Contact in advance your government's commercial office or embassy in each country that you plan to visit, if they exist.
 - Do not try to cover too much territory.
 - Allow enough open time for unforeseen meetings.
 - Avoid visiting during public and school holidays.
 - Work out your itinerary to economize on costs.
 - Take along sufficient funds.
 - Try to arrange your hotel in advance.
 - Check visa and health certificate requirements several weeks in advance of your departure.
 - Consider using public transportation in cities.
 - Call ahead to re-confirm appointments.
 - Be punctual for appointments.
 - Write up your notes on each visit as soon as possible.
 - Write to your contacts when you return home.
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(Condensed from the article "Promoting Exports to Europe Part I by Bruce Bendow in International Trade "Forum" (1/1992) Published by the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT).

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