



## Going Global: 10 Secrets to Success

*The sky is the limit when looking at the global marketplace. Are you ready to take the leap?*

**By Susan Baka**

Globalization and advances in technology have created a huge world market. Although exporting may seem complex and daunting at first, the rewards reaped can be well worth the time, effort and expense. Here are some tips to help you navigate your way successfully:

**1. Do your homework.** This includes researching your target market and potential customers, which you can do through the Internet, trade publications and associations, and government departments. Starting with the U.S. market is often a logical first step in exporting because of the close proximity and similar language and culture.

**2. Take advantage of government resources.** International Trade Canada has a network of trade commissioners around the world ready to help potential exporters. Services are free and include one-on-one export help, up-to-date foreign market and industry information, advice on how to access export financing, and information on trade fairs, missions and events. Check out [www.infoexport.gc.ca](http://www.infoexport.gc.ca) or call 1-888-811-1119.

**3. Network.** Maximize your potential for success by expanding your contacts and building relationships. Attend international trade shows and participate in trade missions. Become active in your industry association and join trade organizations. A particularly good one for women, in which I'm active, is the Organization of Women in International Trade-Toronto ([www.owit-toronto.ca](http://www.owit-toronto.ca)). It's part of a worldwide organization ([www.owit.org](http://www.owit.org)) designed to promote women doing business globally and includes networking, education and global business contacts.

**4. Find a mentor.** Better yet, find more than one mentor. Seek out Presidents and owners of companies – both males and females – with lots of exporting experience.

**5. Develop an international profile.** Become an authority in your industry by writing magazine articles, giving speeches and even developing an industry guidebook. Attend and offer to speak at international conferences.

**6. Build your cross-cultural savvy.** Be aware of differences in culture and become knowledgeable about how business is done in other countries. When they see you've educated yourself, they'll respect you.

**7. Market astutely.** You don't have to spend huge dollars on big advertising campaigns to raise your overseas profile. If you are unsure of where to target your efforts, or marketing is not your forte, consider hiring an expert to help. I assist my clients with targeted, well-planned communications.

**8. Use the Web.** The Internet is a great equalizer for women, because people don't know if you are working from your basement or a downtown office. And using the Web to do business globally – particularly after you have established face-to-face contact – reduces the amount of international travel needed.



**9. Focus on your business, not on your gender.** Your gender may be a barrier in some cultures, but try to be understanding and don't impose your values. Just be prepared and try to take things with a fair bit of humour.

**10. Be prepared for a long haul.** It may take some time between your initial decision to export and your first signed contract, so have perseverance and patience. Many cultures want to build personal relationships with the people with whom they do business. That, in itself, is one of the most fulfilling and fun parts of exporting!

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