

# Making Contacts

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By now, your company has identified its most promising markets (using [Chapters 2 & 3](#)) and devised a strategy to enter those markets([Chapter 4](#)). As discussed earlier, a company may sell directly to a customer or use the assistance of an in-country representative (agents or distributors) to eventually reach the end user. This chapter describes some possible sources of assistance in locating buyers, evaluating trade shows and missions, and conducting other programs designed to make contacts.

## **Department of Commerce Business Contact Programs**

The U.S. Department of Commerce can help exporters identify and qualify leads for potential buyers, distributors, joint venture partners, and licensees from both private and public sources. Along with its various product, country, and program experts, the Department of Commerce has an extensive network of commercial officers posted in countries that represent 95 percent of the market for U.S. products. State department economic officers provide many of these services at U.S. embassies and consulates that are not staffed by commercial officers.

Programs available through the Department of Commerce are listed in this section. Exporters should contact the nearest Commerce Export Assistance Center for more information or contact the Trade Information Center at 1-800-USA-TRADE. Information on these programs is also available at the Commercial Service Web site: <http://www.usatrade.gov/>.

## **Agent/Distributor Service (ADS)**

The Agent/Distributor Service (ADS) is used to locate foreign agents and distributors abroad. It provides a custom search overseas for interested and qualified foreign representatives on behalf of a U.S. exporter. Commercial officers abroad conduct the search and prepare a report identifying up to six foreign prospects that have examined the U.S. firm's product literature and have expressed interest in representing the U.S. firm's products. The U.S. company is given the names and addresses of the foreign firms, names and titles of persons to contact, telephone numbers, cable addresses and fax numbers, and brief comments about the agent or distributor and its stated interest in the proposal.

ADS application forms may be obtained from Export Assistance Centers. Trade specialists at these offices can help prepare applications and provide further guidance.

# Commercial News USA

Commercial News USA (CNUSA) provides worldwide exposure for U.S. products and services through an illustrated catalog-magazine and electronic bulletin boards. The catalog-magazine is distributed through U.S. embassies and consulates to business readers in 139 countries. Copies are also made available to international visitors at trade events around the world. Current hard-copy distribution averages 145,000 copies, with ten issues per year. Information in CNUSA is further disseminated by Commercial Service posts or local organizations that reprint all or part of the publication. CNUSA's electronic distribution reaches private sector and government electronic business bulletin boards with over 2 million business subscribers in key overseas markets.

Listings in CNUSA describe the major features of an export product or service. The name, address, and telephone and fax numbers of the U.S. manufacturer or distributor are included along with a photo or illustration. A variety of advertising formats are available. The electronic versions of CNUSA transmit the complete text of the magazine listings, without illustrations, to Economic Bulletin Board subscribers (See [Chapter 7](#)).

CNUSA covers more than 30 industry categories. Companies may also market services and trade and technical literature through CNUSA. Pharmaceuticals and medicines for human use, raw materials, agricultural commodities, sexually oriented products, alcoholic beverages, and items on the U.S. munitions List are excluded from CNUSA. All products in the publication must be at least 51 percent U.S. product.

Trade leads generated by CNUSA help U.S. firms identify potential export markets and make contacts that lead to direct sales, representation, distributorships, or joint venture or licensing agreements. Overseas inquiries come directly to participating U.S. firms and are address-coded to allow for tracking and evaluation.

## Commercial Service International Contacts and Country Directories of International Contacts

Commercial Service International Contacts (CSIC) provides contact and product information on more than 30,000 firms abroad interested in U.S. products. The Country Directories of International Contacts (CDIC) is a listing of in-country directories of importers, agents, trade associations, and government agencies on a country-by-country basis that can be helpful to U.S. exporters. Both are available on the NTDB (see [Chapter 2](#)).

## Customized Market Analysis

The Customized Market Analysis Program (CMA) is a custom-tailored research service which provides U.S. firms with specific information on marketing and foreign representation for their individual products in one market abroad. Interviews or surveys are conducted to determine overall marketability of the product, key competitors, price of

comparable products, customary distribution and promotion practices, trade barriers, possible business partners, and applicable trade events. Fees for CMA surveys vary from \$1000 to \$5100 per report, per country.

## Gold Key Service

The Gold Key Service is a custom-tailored business matching service. It is offered by the Commercial Service in key export markets around the world. The service includes orientation briefings, market research, appointments with potential partners, interpreter services for meetings, and assistance in developing follow-up strategies.

## International Company Profiles

An International Company Profile (ICP) is a background report on a specific foreign firm prepared by commercial officers overseas. These reports include information on the type of organization, year established, relative size, number of employees, general reputation, territory covered, language preferred, product lines handled, principal owners, financial references, and trade references. Each ICP also contains a general narrative report by the U.S. commercial officer who conducted the investigation concerning the reliability of the foreign firm.

**Note:** The ICP service is offered in countries that lack adequate private sector providers of credit and background information on local companies. Credit reports on foreign companies are available from many private sector sources including, (in the United States) Dun and Bradstreet and Graydon International. For help in identifying private sector sources of credit reports, contact the nearest Export Assistance Center.

## Trade Opportunities Program

The Trade Opportunities Program (TOP) provides timely leads from overseas firms seeking to buy or represent U.S. products and services. U.S. commercial officers worldwide gather leads through local channels. Lead details such as specifications, quantities, end use, and delivery and bid deadlines are transmitted daily to the computer center in Washington, D.C., reviewed, and then immediately posted on the Commerce Department's Electronic Bulletin Board (see [Chapter 2](#)). Users can retrieve the TOP files (and all other files) from the EBB each day through a personal computer and modem. Subscribers may use, edit, or redistribute the leads in any way they wish.

Some products, because of their nature, are difficult to sell unless the potential buyer has an opportunity to examine them in person. Sales letters and brochures can be helpful, but an actual presentation of products in the export market may prove more beneficial. One way for a company to actually present its products to an overseas market is by participating in trade events such as trade shows, fairs, trade missions, matchmaker delegations, and catalog exhibitions.

Trade fairs are "shop windows" where thousands of firms from many countries display their goods and services. They serve as a marketplace where buyers and sellers can meet with mutual convenience. Some fairs, especially in Europe, have a history that goes back centuries.

Attending trade fairs involves a great deal of planning. The potential exhibitor must take into account the following logistic considerations:

- Choosing the proper fair out of the hundreds that are held every year;
- Obtaining space at the fair, along with designing and constructing the exhibit;
- Shipping products to the show, along with unpacking and setup;
- Providing proper hospitality such as refreshments, along with maintaining the exhibit;
- Being able to separate serious business prospects from those just browsing; and;
- Breaking down and packing the exhibit, and return shipping.

A trade magazine or association can generally provide information on major shows. They can be privately run or government sponsored. Many trade shows have a "U.S. Pavilion" which is dedicated to U.S. businesses participating in the trade show. For additional guidance, contact the local Export Assistance Center, or visit the Commercial Service Internet Web site at <http://www.usatrade.gov/>.

## **International Buyer Program**

The International Buyer Program (IBP) supports major domestic trade shows featuring products and services of U.S. industries with high export potential. Commercial Services officers worldwide recruit qualified foreign buyers to attend selected trade shows. The shows are extensively publicized through embassy and regional commercial newsletters, catalog-magazines, foreign trade associations, chambers of commerce, travel agents, government agencies, corporations, import agents, and equipment distributors in targeted markets. The International Business Center at each International Buyer Program event provides interpreters, multilingual brochures, export counseling, and private meeting rooms.

For more information, contact the International Buyer Program office at the U.S. Department of Commerce: telephone 202-482-0481; fax 202-482-0115; contact your local Export Assistance Center, or visit the Commercial Service Internet Web site at <http://www.ita.doc.gov/uscs>.

## Trade Fair Certification Program

The Department of Commerce Trade Fair Certification Program is a partnership arrangement between private sector show organizers and the International Trade Association to assist and encourage U.S. firms to promote their products at appropriate trade fairs abroad. Certification of a U.S. organizer signals to exhibitors, visitors, and the host country government that the event is an excellent marketing opportunity and that participants will receive the support of the U.S. Government.

Certified organizers are authorized to recruit and manage a U.S. pavilion at the show. They are especially focused on attracting new-to-market small and medium-sized U.S. firms, and can help with all aspects of freight forwarding, customs clearance, exhibit design, and on-site services.

Certified organizers receive government assistance such as:

- Designation as the official U.S. pavilion;
- Authorized use of an official Commercial Service certification logo;
- On-site support/counseling for U.S. exhibitors from U.S. embassy commercial staff;
- Local market information and contact lists;
- Press releases and other promotion actions;
- Advertising and marketing assistance from Commerce Department Export Assistance Centers;
- Secretarial/Presidential support letters where appropriate;
- Exhibitor briefings; and
- Opening ceremonies/ribbon-cutting/dignitary liaison.

For more information on the Trade Fair Certification Program, contact the Trade Fair Certification Program office at 202-482-2525; fax 202-482-0872; or visit the Commercial Service Internet Web site at <http://www.ita.doc.gov/uscs>.

## **Certified Trade Missions**

The U.S. Department of Commerce supports or "certifies," appropriate missions organized by state and private-sector trade promotion agencies. Participants in Certified Trade Missions benefit from a range of on-site services, including market briefings, business appointments, and opportunities to meet high-level government and industry officials. Organizers seeking to certify congressional or governor-led missions are invited to send their requests to the Department's Certified Trade Missions Program in Washington, D.C. Requests to certify other types of missions may be sent directly to the Commercial Service office at the U.S. embassy or consulate in the chosen overseas market. For more information, contact the Certified Trade Missions Program office, telephone 202-482-0111; fax 202-482-0115, or visit the Commercial Service Internet Web site at <http://www.ita.doc.gov/uscs>.

## **Matchmaker Trade Delegations**

Matchmaker trade delegations are Commerce Department recruited and planned trade missions designed to introduce new-to-export and new-to-market businesses to prospective representatives and distributors overseas. Matchmaker delegations usually target major markets in two to three countries with strong sales potential for U.S. goods and services. Commercial specialists at the U.S. embassies and consulates in the targeted countries evaluate U.S. participant companies' product or service potential, prescreen business contacts, arrange one-on-one business meetings, and handle all event logistics, including interpreter services.

For more information, contact the Matchmaker Trade Delegations office at telephone 202-482-3119; fax 202-482-0178; your local Export Assistance Center, or visit the Commercial Service Internet Web site at <http://www.ita.doc.gov/uscs>.

## **Multi-State/Catalog Exhibition Program**

This Multi-State/Catalog Exhibition Program showcases U.S. company product literature in fast-growing markets within a geographic region. The U.S. Department of Commerce and representatives from state economic development agencies present product literature to hundreds of interested business prospects abroad and send the trade leads directly to U.S. participants.

This program is particularly well suited for use in developing markets because it requires the exporter to make a much smaller investment than a trade mission or other personal visit.

For more information, contact the Multi-State Catalog Exhibition Program at: telephone 202-482-3973; fax 202-482-2718; your local Export Assistance Center, or visit the Commercial Service Internet Web site at <http://www.ita.doc.gov/uscs>.

## Other Department of Commerce Programs

# American Business Centers

American Business Centers (ABCs) provide professional office and support services in 12 important commercial cities across Russia and the Newly Independent States (NIS) exclusively to U.S. companies. Authorized by Congress and the 1992 Freedom Support Act, the ABC program emphasizes helping small and medium-sized U.S. firms to identify opportunities in Russia and the NIS. Each ABC is a vital, on-site link in an information service network that offers American-style business facilities to U.S. firms.

ABCs are a cost-effective way to conduct business in Russia and the Newly Independent States. There are nine ABCs in Russia, as well as one located in each of the following countries: Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. ABCs offer the following broad range of business development and facilitation services:

- Business counseling;
- Market research;
- Locating, screening, and assessing partners;
- Trade mission and event planning;
- Business appointment scheduling;
- Office and conference room rental;
- International telephone, fax, and e-mail;
- Secretarial assistance; and
- Interpretation and translation services.

The ABCs offer educational outreach and training programs to local firms, and provide access to commercial libraries and business information covering a wide variety of timely commercial, legal, and technical issues.

Additional information about American Business Centers is available by calling 202-482-4655 and selecting option #21 or ordering a flashfax by dialing 202-482-3145 and

ordering document #7022; or visiting the ABC home page at <http://www.bisnis.doc.gov/> .

## **Infrastructure Division**

The Infrastructure Division helps U.S. firms compete for contracts for planning, engineering, constructing, and systems installation for large foreign projects in the areas of transportation, power generation, water/environmental installations, buildings and commercial infrastructure, and manufacturing/process plant and other industrial infrastructure. Information on foreign opportunities in these areas and assistance to U.S. firms competing for such projects is provided upon request. As circumstances warrant, the Infrastructure Division mobilizes and coordinates appropriate support from other U.S. Government agencies, including foreign service posts abroad. For further information, contact the Infrastructure Division, Room 4314, International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C. 20230; telephone 202-482-4436; or our Web site: <http://www.ita.doc.gov/td/infrastructure/>.

## **Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service**

Through a network of counselors, attaches, trade officers, commodity analysts, and marketing specialists, the Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) can help arrange contacts overseas and provide marketing assistance for companies that export agricultural commodities. Extensive information on the FAS is also available on the Internet. Contact: Trade Assistance and Promotion Office, 202-720-7420; fax 202-690-4374; Internet: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/>.

## **Agency for International Development**

The Agency for International Development (AID) administers most of the U.S. foreign economic assistance programs. These programs offer export opportunities for U.S. suppliers of professional technical assistance services and commodities (goods, products, equipment, and material). Professional technical assistance services generally offer opportunities for consultant and expert capabilities in agriculture, nutrition, and rural development; education and human resources; health and population; and energy and environmental assessment. Opportunities to export commodities are available through the commodity import programs that AID operates in select AID-recipient countries, and through AID's direct procurement of commodities. In addition, AID funds may be available to finance developmentally sound projects in certain recipient countries involving U.S. capital goods and services. U.S. exporters are best positioned to obtain orders by making the local purchasing agencies aware of their products at an early stage. For information on available funds, projects under consideration, and contacts, exporters traveling to developing countries where an AID program is in place, should

contact their nearest Export Assistance Center or call 800-USAID4U.

AID, in partnership with the Department of Commerce, offers opportunities for U.S. exporters of environmental products and services. In Asia, AID assistance is spearheaded through the U.S.-Asia Environmental Partnership (US-AEP) and in Latin America through its Environmental Technologies Network for the Americas (ETNA).

These programs represent a public-private partnership in environmental protection and remediation. This ten-year initiative, began in 1992 and is currently operating in most Asian and Latin American countries. This is a partnership with U.S. government agencies, state and local groups, environmental organizations, and businesses and non-governmental organizations. The efforts of US-AEP and ETNA are focused on stemming biodiversity loss, controlling and eliminating industrial pollution, improving energy efficiency, and assisting in the development of urban environmental infrastructure.

## **U.S. Trade and Development Agency**

The U.S. Trade and Development Agency (TDA) assists in the creation of jobs for Americans by helping U.S. companies pursue overseas business opportunities. Through the funding of feasibility studies, orientation visits, specialized training grants, business workshops, and various forms of technical assistance, TDA helps American businesses compete for infrastructure and industrial projects in emerging markets.

TDA's mission is to help companies get in on the "ground floor" of export opportunities and level the playing field with heavily subsidized foreign competitors.

Because of its focused mission, TDA only considers infrastructure and industrial projects that have the potential to mature into significant export opportunities for American companies and create jobs in the United States. Projects are typically in agriculture, energy and power, health care, manufacturing, mining and minerals development, telecommunications, transportation and environmental services.

To be considered for funding, projects must:

- Face strong competition from foreign companies that receive subsidies and other support from their governments;
- Be a development priority of the country where the project is located and have the endorsement of the U.S. embassy in that nation;
- Represent an opportunity for sales of U.S. goods and services that is many times greater than the cost of TDA assistance; and
- Be likely to receive implementation financing and have a procurement process open to U.S. firms.

Contact TDA at 703-875-4357 or visit its Web site at <http://www.tda.gov> for more information.

## **State and Local Government Assistance**

Most states can provide an array of services to exporters. Many states maintain international offices in major markets; the most common locations are in Western Europe and Japan. Working closely with the commercial sections of U.S. embassies in these countries, state foreign offices can provide assistance in making contacts in foreign markets, providing such services as the following:

- Specific trade leads with foreign buyers,
- Assistance for trade missions, such as itinerary planning, appointment scheduling, travel, and accommodations,
- Promotional service for goods or services, including representing the state at trade shows, and
- Help in qualifying potential buyers, agents, or distributors.
- In addition, some international offices of state development organizations help organize and promote foreign-buyer missions to the United States, which can be effective avenues of exporting with little effort. Attracting foreign investment and developing tourism are also very important activities of state foreign offices. Increasingly, many cities and counties are providing these same services.

## **Business and Service Organization Contacts**

Contacts made through business colleagues and associations can often prove invaluable to U.S. exporters. A colleague with firsthand experience in an international market may give a personal recommendation for an agent, distributor, or potential buyer. Conversely, the recommendation against the use of a representative for credit or reliability reasons may save the firm a number of problems. Attending export seminars and industry trade shows is an excellent method of networking with business people who have international experience. In addition, trade associations can provide a valuable source of contacts with individuals who may wish to share their experience of identifying and selling to buyers and representatives in foreign markets.

Banks can be another source of assistance in locating overseas representation. The international departments, branches, or correspondent banks of U.S. banks may help

locate reputable firms that are qualified and willing to represent U.S. exporters. In addition, freight forwarders, freight carriers, airlines, port authorities, and American chambers of commerce maintain offices throughout the world. These service firms often have contacts with qualified representatives and can make recommendations to the U.S. firm. Foreign embassy and consulate commercial offices may also be able to provide directories and assistance.

### **Promotion in Publications and Other Media**

A large and varied assortment of magazines covering international markets is available to exporters through U.S. publishers. They range from specialized international magazines relating to individual industries such as construction, beverages, and textiles, to worldwide industrial magazines covering many industries. Many consumer publications produced by U.S.-based publishers are also available. Several are produced in national-language editions (for example, Spanish for Latin America and so on) and also offer "regional buys" for specific export markets of the world. In addition, several business directories published in the United States list foreign representatives geographically or by industry specialization.

Publishers frequently supply potential exporters with helpful market information, make specific recommendations for selling in the markets they cover, help advertisers locate sales representation, and render other services to aid international advertisers.

Many of these magazines and directories may be available at libraries, Commerce Export Assistance Centers, or in the Department of Commerce's Reference Room, Room 7046, Washington, D.C. State departments of commerce, trade associations, business libraries, and major universities may also provide these publications.

Television, radio, and specially produced motion pictures may also be used by a U.S. business for promoting products or services, depending on the country. In areas where programs may be seen and heard in public places, television and radio promotions offer one of the few means of bringing an advertising message to great numbers of people. In many countries, various forms of outdoor advertising (billboards, posters, electric signs, and streetcar and bus cards) are widely used to reach the mass audience.

Because of the specialized knowledge required to advertise and promote successfully in foreign markets, U.S. firms may find useful the services of a U.S. advertising agency with offices or correspondents abroad. Some U.S. advertising agencies handle nothing but foreign advertising, and some marketing consultants specialize in the problems peculiar to selling in foreign markets. Contact your local Export Assistance Center.