

# Southeastern MA Regional SBDC Newsletter

*Contributing to the Economic & Entrepreneurial Growth in Massachusetts Since 1980*

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## PTAC – Another Successful Client

**Sharon Green**, the President of **Custom Copper & Slate** in Medfield MA, a construction firm specializing in slate, copper and architectural roofing, came to the Small Business Development Center in April of 2002. Sharon's goal was a simple one - she wanted Custom Copper & Slate to secure work from the government in order to increase sales. The SBDC's Procurement Technical Assistance Center, through its local Procurement Specialist, Dan Lilly, was the proper resource to assist Sharon.

At the time, Custom Copper and Slate had two employees and was primarily a seasonal business. Sharon Green wanted to grow the business and was certain that it could become much more. Sharon and Dan met at the Small Business Development Center office in Fall River MA. Sharon was provided counseling regarding the opportunities available through government contracts. The counseling covered topics such as registering to begin bidding, socioeconomic programs for particular types of bidders, strategies for subcontracting, and the importance of bonding. This introductory session was enough to introduce Sharon to the market and allow her to identify the areas where she thought her business could successfully compete. "This was extremely helpful, providing leads for my company. I followed these leads and was able to secure many jobs with the information. Dan gave me a path to follow and it has increased my contracts quite a bit."

After the meeting, Sharon began receiving government contract leads which allowed Custom Copper and Slate to identify specific projects for which they were qualified to bid. Within weeks the company was bidding for small projects which did not require bonding. They won their first government contract within six months of the initial meeting. The company continued to win small projects over the course of the next year.

Recognizing that her business was owned and controlled by a woman, and that she could benefit from this, Sharon set about applying for certification as a disadvantaged, woman owned business through the SBA. After completing the paperwork, Sharon's company was accepted into the SBA's 8(a) business development program, created to help small disadvantaged businesses access the federal procurement market.

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The Southeastern Massachusetts Regional Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is a counseling center of the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network. The SBDC provides free and confidential one-on-one management counseling to the small business community in Southeastern Massachusetts in the counties of Bristol, Barnstable, Dukes, Nantucket, Plymouth and part of Norfolk.

SBDC assistance is tailored to the needs of individual clients. Our mission is to support the future success of your business.

Management Counseling Services include, but are not limited to:

- Start-up Businesses
- Business Plan Development
- Financial Plan Development
- Marketing & Sales Strategies
- Cash Flow Analysis
- Organizational & Personnel Issues
- Government Procurement Assistance
- Minority Business Assistance
- International Trade Assistance

## SBDC Staff Members

**Melinda L. Ailes**

Senior Management Counselor

**Daniel Lilly, Jr.**

Procurement Specialist

**Clifford Robbins**

Senior Management Counselor

**Michael P. Sullivan**

International Trade Counselor

**Mark R. Allio**

Senior Management Counselor

**Tammi A. Jacobsen**

Client Service Coordinator

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Acceptance into this program allowed Sharon the opportunity to increase her company's visibility and highlight her experience and ability. "I found that I met all the criteria for the SBA 8(a) program and started the process. My company is 100% woman owned and somewhat disadvantaged in the field of roofing. It was an extremely long process with a lot of paperwork back and forth but I found it was well worth the time and energy involved."

Seeking to increase Custom Copper and Slate's market share, Sharon secured bonding through the SBA's bonding program for companies having difficulty getting bonding in the primary market. By securing bonding, Custom Copper and Slate was able to begin bidding larger projects. These larger projects meant larger payrolls, and would allow the company to grow. This was the key to building the business as Sharon had intended.

Throughout this time, Sharon received counseling from the Procurement Technical Assistance Center i.e. completing forms and applications, negotiation strategies, and marketing strategies. "Any time I have needed assistance I have been able to contact Dan Lilly and he has directed me to the information I need. This is an extremely helpful tool."

Today, primarily as a result of government contracts, Custom Copper and Slate is a seasoned, experienced government contractor. Business for Custom Copper and Slate is no longer seasonal, and the company now has ten employees. They have secured bonding through the primary market and are bidding larger and larger projects. "Custom Copper and Slate is now a larger business, which has continued to secure many government contracts therefore increasing sales." They have ten full time people that have provided quality service for the firm and gainful employment for their own families. Sharon has expressed on several occasions how pleased she is with the SBDC program being able to put her where she wants to be faster.

### Spotlight

Tammi A. Jacobsen joined the Southeastern MA Regional Small Business Development Center as Client Service Coordinator in 2004. Tammi provides assistance as a liaison between our SBDC counselors and clients. She also provides assistance as our training and community outreach coordinator. In addition, Tammi participates in community service projects with New Bedford Public Schools which have included a business/entrepreneur presentation at Keith Middle School, character education/team building exercise with youth in the Mayor's summer program and by Adopting-a-Homeroom at New Bedford High School.

Tammi has over 10 years experience in the business field in the areas of administration, customer service and accounting services. She holds her Associate in Science in Elementary Education from Bristol Community College and is currently working towards her Bachelor of Arts in Humanities/Social Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

## The Export Marketing Plan: Your Roadmap to Success Overseas

Whether you are an exporting novice or selling throughout the world, the planning process is crucial to the success of any exporter. Export marketing plans may take different forms and vary from company to company, however there are several common elements that all exporters should address to effectively assess and enter international markets.

### *Commitment and In-House Assessment*

An exporter's likelihood of success often can be directly tied to the level of commitment demonstrated by the firm's top management to the export effort. It is helpful, therefore, to outline the company's commitment and resources at the beginning of the export development process. This may include a diverse range of information, including:

- Goals and objectives to achieve through exporting (e.g., increase in sales; increase in market share; diversity of sales base, etc.)
- Resources devoted to the export effort (e.g., organization and staffing of export activities; cost, budget and ROI projections; timeline for development of export markets; etc.)
- Capacity for increased sales and production (e.g., impact of export sales on domestic sales; production capacity and added costs of increased production; production and cost projections for product modifications required in export markets)

### *Overseas Market Assessment*

Very often, companies instinctually know which countries hold the most potential as export markets. Indicators such as U.S. customers moving into foreign markets, unsolicited inquiries from overseas distributors, and competitor export activity can all provide direction as to where a company should focus its export efforts. Aside from tapping into existing knowledge, however, companies should investigate a number of factors to make a well-informed assessment of potential export markets. Some of these factors include:

- Overall market size and growth projections for the company's product and/or service in the target market
- The competitive environment and pricing levels in the target market
- Factors which may impede the exporter's access to the market (e.g., tariff levels, regulatory environment, significant product modification requirements, country/political risk, U.S. export controls, etc.)

There is a wealth of market information available to assess overseas markets. For example, through TradeStats Express (<http://tse.export.gov>), companies can research the export activity of specific U.S. products and analyze which countries are importing the most or growing the fastest. Through the United Nations Comtrade web site (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/comtrade/>), companies can research the trade activity of specific products between all countries, helping exporters to research the trade activity and market share of foreign competitors.

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The Export.gov web site also provides access to an enormous amount of qualitative international market research. Through this site, exporters can research general demographic and economic information, but more importantly, the site also offers extensive market research on specific products and industries in different countries. These resources offer a great starting point for companies making an initial assessment of overseas markets. State and federal government agencies can also offer additional customized or specialized information, depending on the exporter's needs.

Once an initial assessment has been made, the exporter should identify a few target countries for further investigation. These countries may represent the largest potential markets, or they may represent smaller markets with less competition and stronger growth potential.

#### *Market Entry Strategy*

For each target market, the exporter should research and develop a market entry strategy. This strategy outlines how the exporter intends to reach end customers and promote its products in the market. Factors to consider in the market entry strategy include:

- Target customer profile (e.g., company characteristics, purchasing decision makers, specific examples of major customers)
- Market entry channel to reach target customers (e.g., sales agent, distributor, licensing partner, direct sales presence, etc.).
- Channel partner profile (e.g., product line, customer base, geographic coverage, technical support capability, etc.).
- Pricing strategy (e.g., export cost analysis, market price sensitivity, pricing methodology, distributor discounting, etc.).

#### *Market Development Action Plan*

This final component of the export marketing plan outlines actions for achieving the market development goals outlined in the market entry strategy. Examples of specific action items include:

- Identification, qualification and selection of channel partners
- Sales and promotional activities
- Performance measures

Exporters should keep in mind that there is a broad range of information and assistance from public and private sector service providers. Government agencies, for example, can often provide valuable assistance in linking exporters with suitable channel partners in target export markets.

While there are a host of operational concerns that exporters must also address (e.g., legal, payment, financing, logistical and other issues), the export marketing plan provides a strong foundation for making sound business decisions overseas. The research and thought invested in the planning process will pay off in the end, giving the exporter the best chance for success internationally.

*Paula Murphy is director of the Massachusetts Export Center, part of the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network. The Export Center provides export counseling, technical assistance, training, market research and trade promotional assistance to Massachusetts businesses.*

**ENTREPRENEURIAL WORKSHOPS** are repeated in a different location once a month. For reservations & directions please contact: Tamarah Barao @ SEED 508-822-1020. Costs for trainings are FREE.

**Session I:** Learn the fundamentals of planning, preparing for & financing your business.

**Session II:** Learn to understand financial statements how they help to determine the health of your business.

**Session I:** Tues. January 23      **Time:** 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**Session II:** Tues. January 30      **Time:** 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**Location:** Metro South Chamber, 60 School St, Brockton MA.

**Session I:** Tues. February 20      **Time:** 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**Session II:** Tues. February 20      **Time:** 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

**Location:** Bridgewater Savings Bank, 756 Orchard St, Raynham, MA.

**Session I:** Wed. March 14      **Time:** 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**Session II:** Wed. March 14      **Time:** 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

**Location:** Benjamin Franklin Bank, 58 Main St, Franklin, MA.

**To better serve the Massachusetts small business community, the Southeastern Massachusetts Regional SBDC has outreach sites in conjunction with chambers of commerce and economic development entities.**

**Attleboro Chamber      North Attleboro Chamber**

**Falmouth Chamber      Yarmouth Chamber**

**Plymouth Chamber      Tri Town Chamber**

**Cape Cod Chamber      Metro South Chamber**

**New Bedford Quest Center**

**For general information, training information or to make an appointment, please contact Tammi A. Jacobsen at extension 104 or please go to our website:**

[www.msbdc.org/semass](http://www.msbdc.org/semass)

"The Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network is a partnership program with the U.S. Small Business Administration and the Massachusetts Department of Business and Technology under cooperative agreement 7-603001-Z-0022-27 through the University of Massachusetts Amherst. SBDCs are a program supported by the U. S. Small Business Administration and extended to the public on a non-discriminatory basis. SBA cannot endorse any products, opinions or services of any external parties or activities. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities will be made, if requested at least two weeks in advance. For further information, contact the Fall River SBDC office at (508) 673-9783."



*"Funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the SBA"*