



Assessment for Expanding Exporters

A questionnaire to assess exporting needs and capabilities of firms that are largely reactive exporters. Identify key considerations when looking to expand into new markets.



Exporter Assessments

Many U.S. companies are occasional or reactive exporters, with international sales based largely on responding to incoming sales inquiries from abroad. Some firms may also be actively exporting to one or two markets, or struggling in the export process. This questionnaire provides an initial assessment of your exporting needs and capabilities, and identifies key considerations when looking to expand into new markets. Many of the links will guide you to more information and resources on exporting. The end of this document points to our series of [market destinations videos](#); export markets that may hold potential for your company.

Is your company's management committed to developing export markets and willing and able to dedicate time and resources to the process? Does your company have an export business plan with defined goals and strategies?

Management commitment is the number one determining factor for export success, and an essential part of any export plan. Many companies begin export activities haphazardly, without carefully screening markets or options for market entry. Without an export plan, better export opportunities are often overlooked. Start by formulating a well-thought-out export strategy. View [My Export Plan](#), [Research the Global Market Place](#), and [Select Initial Markets](#).

Does your company have sufficient production capacity that can be committed to the export market? Will financing be required for any expansion?

Can your company meet the increased demand it is creating? More space and equipment might be required to manufacture for the specific countries (which often have their own product standards and regulations) you are selling to. Financing might be needed to include any product modification costs. Explore on the [Determine Export Potential](#) page.

Does your company have the financial resources to actively support an increase of product sales in targeted overseas markets?

A big hurdle for many companies is market development, as it requires funds for activities such as international travel, trade missions, trade show participation, market research, and business training. However, federal government export financing programs can assist. View [Obtain Financing](#) for links to the Trade Finance Guide.

Do you have both U.S. and foreign Intellectual Property Protection for your product?

U.S. businesses should know that protecting your intellectual property domestically does not extend your protection internationally, so companies should do their research first before exporting. Understand how to [Protect Your IP Abroad](#).

Does your company have capabilities to modify ingredients and product packaging to meet foreign import regulations, cultural preferences, and survive competition?

Selecting and preparing your product for export requires both knowledge of the product and the unique characteristics of each target market. However, before the sale can occur, your product(s) may need to be modified to satisfy buyer tastes, or regulatory requirements in foreign countries. View the Plan Your Market Entry Strategy video on the [How to Export Video Series](#).

Does your company have appropriate knowledge in shipping its product overseas, such as identifying and selecting international freight forwarders and freight costs to ensure customs clearance overseas?

When shipping a product overseas, be aware of packing, labeling, documentation and insurance requirements. Also, be familiar with methods of shipping, import rules and regulations of foreign countries, and export regulations of the U.S. government. Visit the [Navigate Shipping and Logistics](#) page to begin.

Does your company have knowledge and experience of export payment methods, such as developing and negotiating letters of credit?

Experienced exporters have extensive knowledge of export payment mechanisms, extend credit cautiously, and monitor older accounts. A U.S. Commercial Service International Company Profile (ICP) provides key information for credit checks. See the [Methods of Payment](#) page and [Get Export Counseling](#) for guidance.

Does your company have knowledge and understanding of U.S. export controls and compliance?

Check to see if your product might require an export license, particularly if your product has military or dual military/civilian use. There are several U.S. government agencies that oversee licensing requirements for distinct categories of products. Visit [U.S. Export Regulations](#).

Has your firm considered pursuing U.S. free trade agreement countries as part of an export strategy to focus on regions with greater market access for U.S. products?

59 percent of all U.S. exporters sell to only one market, resulting in missed opportunities. A good strategy for expanding into new markets is to look at the 20 U.S. free trade agreement (FTA) countries. For example, if you are selling to Mexico, consider selling to the 10 U.S. FTA countries in Latin America such as Chile, Colombia, Peru, and the CAFTA-DR countries of Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Dominican Republic. Visit the [Free Trade Agreements Help Center](#) for more information.

Has your company considered participating in a trade show or trade mission as a first step to exploring the international demand for your product?

The U.S. Department of Commerce supports thousands of U.S. businesses at numerous domestic and foreign trade shows annually, and organizes and certifies trade missions and events. The shows and missions are excellent avenues for networking and meeting prospective foreign buyer face-to-face. View the Find Foreign Buyers video on the [How to Export Video Series](#).

Has your company contacted your local international trade specialist at the U.S. Commercial Service office to discuss federal, state, county and local export resources?

Most export sales depend on leveraging a variety of export resources. Along with federal export assistance, key export resources are available at various levels within each state. This expertise can include financing, grants, and business councils to name a few. Your local U.S. Commercial Service can assist in identifying these resources. [Let Our Experts Help](#).