

PUBLICATION

U.S. Exporters – Don't Forget the U.S. Commercial Service

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If you are an exporter, you know that finding legitimate international buyers able to pay for your products can be one of the more challenging aspects of doing business. One underutilized strategy for expanding your company's global sales is to review the offerings of the U.S. Commercial Service, which is a service brought to you by the U.S. Department of Commerce and funded by the government.

A good starting point for a company to explore a new country is to review its Country Commercial Guide (CCG). The CCGs offer specific market factors and best practices for exporting to over 125 countries. The guides include overviews of top industry sectors, trade regulations and tariff information companies need to be aware of, and a breakdown of each region's foreign investment climate. The Commercial Service also recently released a useful video series to accompany the CCGs and to highlight business opportunities in 20 key export market destinations that account for nearly 70% of total U.S. export value.

In addition to the CCGs, the Commercial Service's website offers several other educational tools and resources designed to help exporters find international customers, navigate customs and documentation issues, and successfully break into new markets abroad. Such services include i.) International Partner Search, to help identify potential partners and get their detailed company reports; ii.) the Gold Key Service, to help you meet one-on-one with pre-screened sales representatives deemed compatible with your company; iii.) the Single Company Promotion, where trade experts help organize a promotional event for you to reach target audiences; iv.) International Company Profile, where you can order an international company report containing available sales, profit figures, potential liabilities, and other financial information to learn about prospective foreign partners, and v.) the U.S. Exporter Directory, where you can feature and advertise your U.S. products and services on Commercial Service websites. While some of these products do have a fee, they are very reasonable.

These services are just a few of the many useful options the Commercial Service can provide exporters. Its website also provides a list of upcoming sponsored export trade conferences and trade missions. Trade missions are overseas programs for U.S. firms that wish to pursue export opportunities by meeting potential clients in their home country. The Department of Commerce also offers Certified Trade Missions, which are overseas events planned, organized, and led by private and public sector export-oriented groups. The missions offer companies the chance to:

- meet one on one with foreign industry executives and government officials that have been pre-selected to match the exporter's business objectives;
- to network with top industry leaders; and
- to attend briefings and roundtables with the local legal and business community.

For example, the Commercial Service has recently announced a trade conference and mission in the Caribbean region scheduled for early May 2018. The "Trade Americas" conference will offer U.S. companies the chance to explore and investigate six markets across the Caribbean region, a total market of 43 million people who imported over \$20.9 billion of U.S. goods in 2016. This mission will focus on significant regional

export sectors such as medical devices, pharmaceuticals, construction equipment, information and communications technology (ICT), franchising, manufacturing equipment, maritime services among others.

By taking advantage of trade events like the Trade Americas conference, U.S. exporters can make crucial industry contacts and learn new market access strategies for expanding their business. The Commercial Service serves to benefit and assist U.S. businesses, and consistently provides a full range of expert services in all realms of international trade. It is important to note that your international sanctions and compliance requirements will always apply, and these products are not a substitute for an exporter's due diligence regarding the potential export country and the potential buyer. However, if you have vetted a potential customer through the Commercial Service and have done your due diligence, you will have mitigating factors if any unexpected issue arrives.