



TRADETECH
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The Essential Guide to B2B International Trade



How British SMEs can expand into international markets
(and why they should)

Comprehensive, Practical, Concise

UK Edition September, 2024

Foreword

This Guide explains the opportunities for British SMEs in B2B international trade and sets out how they can benefit from them. Entering international markets is not as difficult or as expensive as many think – and can reduce your business risk as well as increase your turnover and profitability.

The topics covered range from why you should consider entering the international markets to closing international contracts and everything in between. The emphasis is on practical solutions.

We sincerely hope that if your company has not yet exported or you would like to expand existing international sales, that the services and resources described here will help you on your journey.

Unlock your international potential, today!

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Disclaimers

TradeTech Solutions does not offer legal, tax, financial or customs advice. This Guide serves as an introduction to International Trade and raises issues that we suggest you consider. You should direct all legal questions to your lawyer, accountant, bank or freight forwarders before you enter into any international agreements. Please note that there may well be other issues not covered in this Guide that affect your international trade. TradeTech Solutions takes no responsibility for the content on 3rd party sites indicated in the Guide, nor does TradeTech Solutions take any responsibility for the services offered by those 3rd parties.

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The Essential Guide to B2B International Trade


The Guide has been prepared specifically for British SMEs and in particular for:

- Owners.
- Managing Directors.
- Finance Directors.
- Sales and Marketing Directors\Managers.
- Buying Directors\Managers.





The Guide is divided into nine Sections plus Appendices:

1. The Introduction
2. First Steps
3. Connecting Buyers & Suppliers
4. Communications – Engaging with Foreign Companies
5. Risk & Risk Management
6. Logistics
7. Pricing, Payments & Contracts
8. Paperwork & Digitalisation
9. Conclusions & Recommendations

N.B. Please note that in addition to the reference resources listed in the Appendices, there are extensive links in the text of the Guide to online resources. Given the dynamic nature of the web, there is no guarantee that these links will remain valid.

If you think there is anything missing in this Guide – or can be improved – just drop the  [editor an email](#). We are here to help.

To keep this Guide as concise as possible, in addition to the Appendices, there are many links in the Guide to supporting information and resources – particularly to the ExportersAlmanac. Therefore, to provide clarity, the nature of the links is indicated by:

-  links internal to this Guide;
-  external links to TradeTech Solutions sites: AEODirectory, ExpoUK.cloud, ExpoWorld.cloud and The ExportersAlmanac;
-  external 3rd party links; and
-  for email addresses.

Links to: emails addresses, LinkedIn contacts, TradeTech websites and 3rd party sites will require internet access. Although all these links were valid at the time of writing, given the dynamic nature of the web, there is no guarantee that these links will remain valid.

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Introduction

This first Section:

1. Explains why we produced this Guide and the key challenges we have set to resolve.
2. It then sets out the arguments that:
 - Describe the benefits of international trade to British SMEs.
 - Debunk typical misconceptions stopping British SMEs expanding abroad.

After considering these arguments, we would hope that you then look at the following Section which covers the First Steps you should take to open up your international potential¹.

Enjoy and Prosper!²

¹ Of course, if your business is focused purely on local needs, then international B2B trade may well not be for you (e.g. personal service providers, local delivery services, restaurants etc.)

² To misquote Spock.

Background to the Guide

Studies³ show that although British SMEs are a major source of growth and job creation, they are underrepresented in the international markets.

Although UK SMEs are estimated to have exported £200 billion worth of goods and services in 2018 accounting for 10% of SME turnover this is below the 16% average across all businesses (and the 20% of EU SMEs). Not only that, the SME share of UK exports has fallen from over 50% in 2009 to 32% in 2018.

The conclusion of these studies is that there is tremendous potential for SMEs. However, there are 6 key challenges to be overcome before SMEs can realise this potential.



Figure 1 – International Trade - The 6 key challenges

These challenges are analysed and covered in the Sections of the Guide of the same name.

³To cite just 2 British studies:

See: [FSB-Export-Taskforce-Recommendations.pdf](#)

See: [UK SME exporting trends.pdf](#)

Why Engage in International Trade?

The first question you should ask yourself is “Why should you engage in international trade?”

Well, there’s a huge market out there for you to attack:

- World trade as a % of global GDP for 2022 was 62.56%, a 5.75% increase from 2021.⁴
- The value of world merchandise trade rose 12% to US\$ 25.3 trillion in 2022.
- The value of world commercial services trade increased 15% in 2022 to US\$ 6.8 trillion.
- Digitally delivered services exports were worth US\$ 3.82 trillion in the same year.⁵
- Although the UK is the world’s 15th largest exporter and 6th largest importer it has just 3% of global exports.

Furthermore, exports offer the following commercial benefits:

- **Risk Reduction**
In addition to generating extra sales, exports reduce your business risk – if one market goes down there is the good chance that your other markets will at least remain stable if not actually increase.
- **Balancing Production Schedules**
If your domestic product is seasonal, you can sell it to countries with coinciding seasons or, better yet, whose seasons start when yours ends. If you have idle capacity for any reason, this can be re-directed to supporting your exports.
- **Improving Economies of Scale**
With increased export production and sales, you can achieve economies of scale and spread costs over a larger volume of revenue. You reduce average unit costs and increase overall profitability and competitiveness.
- **Extending Product Life Cycles**
Exports extend product life cycles. As technology advances and tastes change, many products become obsolete or lose their appeal. But these products may still be valued elsewhere. Over half the world's economies are less developed. They may not need or can't afford your latest model. They may even prefer less costly, earlier versions or used or reconditioned products. Pursue exports in markets that still value goods no longer in demand in the domestic market.
- **Cost Reductions and Improving Your Supply Chain**
You may find that products you need for your own production or distribution network can be found abroad: (a) at lower prices and/or (b) at better quality.
- **Gain New Knowledge and Experience.**
Going international can yield valuable ideas and information about new technologies, new marketing techniques, new suppliers and foreign competitors. The gains can help a company’s domestic as well as foreign businesses.

⁴  See: [Macrotrends](#).

⁵  See: [World Trade Organization](#)

International Trade – Typical Misconceptions

So, if international markets offer so many opportunities, why aren't more SMEs active internationally?

There is no doubt that many more British SMEs have the potential to export, especially those with already strong domestic track records and nationwide distribution.

However, if you have never exported before, looking at international trade text books and listening to conventional advice, it is not unreasonable to think that trying to export is simply too difficult, too expensive and too risky. Yet, if you have survived and succeeded in the UK, with access to the right services and resources it is likely that you can compete anywhere.

Typical misconceptions holding companies back from fully embracing the opportunities offered by International Trade and realising their true potential are (in no particular order):

- It's better to concentrate on the domestic market.
- I'm too small to export.
- I will have to invest significant money and resources simply to check out the opportunities, with no guarantee of success.
- I can't compete overseas.
- You should focus on one new, export market; but which one?
- Fiendish documentation.
- Language difficulties abound.
- Difficult to arrange shipping.
- Tariff and Non-Tariff barriers are too problematic to be overcome.
- Additional tax considerations.
- Payment difficulties and currency risks.
- My Intellectual Property (IP) is at risk.
- I might break a law I didn't know about.

The above concerns may well have been partially valid in the past. However, the good news is that exporting actually reduces your risk. So, taking these concerns in turn:

It's better to concentrate on the domestic market.

That may appear understandable, but it's a very short-sighted view. In effect, non-exporters with exportable products are saying "I'm not interested in the additional sales that exports could bring." Yet, if a new sales order came to you, say from Ireland, Germany or the USA, would you say "No, I'm too busy?" Not likely. The "too busy" retort masks the same fears about exporting reflected in the other excuses.

If you sell only to the domestic market, your sales volumes depend upon the health of the British economy; the British market accounts for just a fraction (3.1%) of the world GDP. If you develop export markets, however, should the domestic market falter for any reason there is the possibility that these can take up slack you experience. By serving a wider portfolio of markets, you actually reduce your risk profile.

I'm too small to export.

False! Globally, the majority of exporting firms are SMEs. It is true that large firms typically account for far more total exports by value, but SMEs dominate the exporting population. So, if other SMEs can export, so can you.

I will have to invest significant money and resources simply to check out the opportunities, with no guarantee of success.

Traditionally, it was absolutely true that you had to risk significant time, effort and investment. This is now no longer the case – as you will see from this Guide. (However, this does **not** mean that you do not need to dedicate careful thought to developing your export plan and put in effort to implement it.)

I can't compete overseas.

The world is large, with varied needs and interests. If your product is bought domestically, it might well be wanted and affordable somewhere else in the world. What makes your product sell in the home market can help it sell abroad. Price is important, but it is not the only selling point. Other competitive factors are needed: utility, quality, service, credit, consumer taste - these may override price differences.

You should focus on just one, new export market; but which one?

Traditionally, companies have been advised to choose a specific country and then conduct a focused export campaign in that country. This means risking success on one market – and entering a market using traditional means requires a considerable investment of time and money. It may even be necessary to exhibit at physical trade fairs – when costs can easily run into tens of thousands of pounds.

This Guide will explain how to promote your products and services to the world⁶ – see who comes to you, and then decide whether to focus on any specific countries. You can do this without leaving your office – and for very low levels of investment.

Fiendish documentation & Jargon.

It is true that exports require extra documentation and that you may have to adapt your packaging and labelling. However, your freight forwarder and/or customs agents can advise you what is required.


 See: Logistics & Supply Chain Management.


You may also come across strange terms and acronyms:

 See [Glossaries covering eCommerce and Trade & Trade Finance](#) which explain relevant terms and acronyms.

Language difficulties.


You must certainly allow for language differences; especially on your website and in your product\service collateral. If you require interpreters for negotiations, these can also be easily and cost-effectively arranged; using online video conferencing.

 See: Language Considerations which explains how language solutions can be easily, quickly and cheaply realised.

⁶ But do draw up a list of countries that you cannot or do not want to serve.  See: Targeting Specific Countries.

It's difficult to arrange shipping.

There are lots of Freight Forwarders out there providing competitive quotes for the shipping services you need. There are online broking services where you can ask for competing bids for your business.


 See: Logistics & Supply Chain Management

 See: [Logistics; Competitive Quotes and Logistics Companies](#) for international services.

 See: [UK Logistic Services](#) for domestic services.

Tariff and non-tariff barriers are too problematic to be overcome.

You should certainly be aware of them. In the main, they are relatively minor issues. However, these are not problems that you have to solve by yourself.

 See: Tariffs & Non-Tariff Barriers.

Additional tax considerations.

There are indeed additional tax considerations when exporting; but they need not be onerous. You should check the situation with your Freight Forwarder and/or your accountant.

 See: Additional Tax and Tax Reporting Considerations

Payment difficulties and currency risks.

You should certainly cover payment and currency risks. However, they are risks that have been faced and resolved by countless companies; so, there are no reasons why you cannot face and resolve the same issues.

 See: Risk Reduction & Management

My Intellectual Property (IP) is at risk.

One of the commercial risks you have to cover – whether you are engaged in just domestic trade or overseas trade – is the danger of your IP being stolen.

 See: Risk Reduction & Management

I might break a law I didn't know about.

While trade laws do vary by country, most are straightforward and non-threatening. For advice and help with contracts etc., consult a lawyer specialising in international trade.

 See: Legal Considerations

OK, still interested? Check out the next Section, First Steps, to see what you should do to develop your Export Plan.

First Steps

The recommended First Steps you should take are to:

1. Complete the **Export Readiness Check List**. This should help you to identify which issues you should resolve to develop your Export Plan.
2. Check your online Company Profile. Can you improve this? Potential foreign partners will do this. Are you showing your best possible profile?⁷
3. Carry out a Competitor Comparative Analysis.
4. Assess whether you need to adapt your products or services for new markets.

⁷ Whether you decide to enter international markets or not, these exercises will also help you domestic positioning.

Before you spend money and dedicate resources implementing any Export Plan, you should:

1. Complete your Export Readiness Check List (see below).
2. Review your own online Company Profile – and make any adjustments to improve this profile.
3. Carry out a Competitor Analysis.
4. Assess whether you need to adapt your products or services.

Once you have completed these, you should have developed a detailed, practical Export Plan. This should provide you with the information you need to decide whether to proceed or not.

Export Readiness Checklist

Although there are few specific recommendations that we can make that are relevant to all readers, we would urge you to print out and complete the **Export Readiness Checklist**.

 See: Appendix One - Export Readiness Check List ⁸

This will help you assess what you need to do to develop and implement your Export Plan *cost effectively*.

This Export Plan will of course also depend upon:

1. How much you have already prepared and developed your Export Plan.
2. The industry sector that you are engaged in.
3. Your resources.
4. Your ambitions.

If you are planning to export goods, then it may also be helpful to also complete the UK Government's outline step by step guide to exporting goods from the UK.

 See: [UK Government's step by step guide](#)

Your Company Profile







You should carry out the following check irrespective of your international ambitions.

You will see that we recommend that you check out potential partners, buyers, suppliers and competitors. It is likely that they will do the same to you. Therefore, you should carry out a check on yourself and decide if anything can be or needs to be improved e.g.

- Your profile in your Companies House.

 See: [Companies House](#)

⁸ This Guide should provide answers or guidance regarding any outstanding questions you may have.

- Your Credit Profile
 -  See: [First Report](#)⁹
 -  See: [Credit Reference Company or Rating Agency](#) for other credit reference companies.
- Your Profile in Kompass (and other Business & Industry Directories)
 -  See: [Kompass Business Place](#)
 -  See: [General Company Directories](#)
 -  See: [Industry Specific Directories](#)
- Have you checked and optimised your SEO? You should certainly carry out an SEO review and website audit. There are a number of free and commercial services that will do this for you.
 -  See: [Online Support Tools & Guides](#).¹⁰
- Do you have any Industry Certifications (e.g. AEO Status, ISO standards)? If so, make sure that these are publicised on your marketing collateral and in your directory profiles.

Once your Company Profile has been perfected (for both domestic and international markets), you can then move on to the next step of targeting the world.

N.B. Make sure that your email addresses are @your domain (and not @gmail.com etc. – this would immediately mark you as being “too small” or “not serious”).

Competitor Comparative Analysis

Your competitors are likely to be both domestic and foreign. There are many resources available which enable you to analyse the competition (and maybe find some competitors you didn't know you have). Once you have carried out your analyses, you can then determine how to optimise your strengths and redress any weaknesses.

This analysis can help you better define your product and service offerings by identifying your relative strengths and weaknesses and those of your competitors. However, we are not suggesting that you do this for all foreign markets. Initially, just review the British market¹¹;

1. Are there in fact any foreign competitors operating in your domestic market?
2. If so, what advantages do they have?
3. How do you compete with them?
4. Consider what advantages your domestic market has over foreign competitors (e.g. lower cost base, better local materials, good time zone positioning, logistical advantages, better design etc. etc.)

⁹ First Report is giving a Free Credit Analyst Report on your own company. Just call FreePhone 0800 970 8755 between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday and they will send your report within a few minutes. Nothing to sign up to, no obligation, just an opportunity to see how good the reports are.

¹⁰ You can find plenty of advice on how to improve the SEO of your website on the internet. It is not within the scope of this Guide to cover these points. If your webmaster is not sure how to proceed, we would suggest beginning with Google's "[Search Engine Optimization \(SEO\) Starter Guide](#)". – You can also search for relevant videos on [YouTube](#).

¹¹ Then, if and when, you target specific countries, then it is advisable to also check out the local competition.

Who are your foreign competitors? In addition to any foreign companies present in your domestic market, there will be others active in other markets. To identify them, we have divided the process into three main steps:

1. Country Analysis.

See where your overseas competitors are based¹².

2. Identify your Foreign Competitors

Who are they?

3. Foreign Competitor Profiles.

Find the names and details of your competitors, then check their trading profile and credit status.

4. Online Competition.

Check the quality of your competitors' (both domestic and international) websites.

Country Analysis

Where are your competitors based? These three ITC services will indicate which countries are providing your international competition:

- Identify those countries which are home to your competitors.

ITC's Trade Map provides - in the form of tables, graphs and maps - indicators on export performance, international demand, alternative markets and competitive markets, as well as a directory of importing and exporting companies. Trade Map covers 220 countries and territories and 5,300 products of the Harmonized System. The monthly, quarterly and yearly trade flows are available from the most aggregated level to the tariff line level.

👉 See: [Trade Map](#)

👉 Click [here](#) to register to the Trade Map service.

👉 See: [Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System 2012 \(HS 2012\)](#)

- Identify those countries which are providers of potential competition.

ITC's Export Potential Map is a *free* tool that turns economic analysis into practical trade information.

Searching by Product or Country, Export Potential Map showcases results from the ITC export potential and diversification assessment methodology that identifies:

1. Products, markets and suppliers with (untapped) export potential.
2. Opportunities for export diversification.

👉 See: [Export Potential Map](#)

¹² You will see we indicate a number of resources from the ITC. The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the only development agency that is fully dedicated to supporting the internationalisation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Established in 1964, the International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organisation and the United Nations.

Competitor Identification

Having identified which countries are offering (actual and/or potential) competition, you can then move on to the next stage of identifying specific actual and potential competitors in those countries.

- Identify buyers and suppliers by searching the country and product(s) of interest.
 1. **ITC's Trade Map** – see above, also provides the names of importers and exporters of specific goods.
 2. **ITC's Global Trade Helpdesk** allows you to search by country and product of interest. The search results provide detailed information about imports, market dynamics, tariffs, regulatory requirements, potential buyers and more.

 See: [Global Trade Helpdesk](#)

3. Search the **Kompass Directory** by country and product.

 See: [Kompass Business Place](#)

Foreign Competitor Profiles

Finding the company profiles of your foreign competitors is straightforward. To find the names of competitors in a specific country, check out:

1. Exporters of the products that interest you listed in ITC's Trade Map.


 See: [ITC's Trade Map](#)

2. Kompass' free website search.

 See: [Kompass free website search](#)

3. Request a Credit Report.

 See: [First Report](#)

 See: [Rating Agencies](#) for alternative service providers

To check their online profile, see the next section.

Online Competition?

Know the web addresses of your competitors? There are a number of tools that you can use to analyse the websites of your competitors - some are free, most require a subscription (in which case they usually offer a free trial period).

The insights these tools provide can help you to improve your own website and digital marketing campaign. In doing so, be sure to:

- **Analyse your actual competitors.**

There's no use in trying to punch above your weight and take on major companies who have made major investments in their website and website support services.

- **Focus on metrics first.**
Take a data-driven approach to analysis first. Try to pick out as many metrics before trying to break down the “why” of their marketing.
- **Turn analysis into action.**
Make sure the data you uncover translates into some sort of action.



See the tools available: [Online Support Tools & Guides - Competitor Analysis](#).

Adapt Your Products and Services?

At the end of these First Steps, you should assess your relative domestic and international market positions and determine what, if anything, you should do to:

1. Strengthen your Market Profile.
2. Adapt the positioning and pricing of your products and services.
3. Adapt your marketing collateral.

Your Export Plan

Finally, you should now have at least the outlines of an Export Plan; which should not have cost you any money – but will have taken you quite some time to complete. The decision now is whether to start implementing this plan – and for some companies it is a perfectly valid decision to say “No”. However, if you think that there is potential for your company and you want to test the international markets, the next Section will set out how you can do this gradually and at low-cost.

Connecting Buyers & Suppliers

Once you have decided to promote your company abroad, there are a number of channels that you can open. This Section sets out your options:

To target the world:

- Your website & Foreign Language SEO.
- Multilingual Microsites.
- B2B Online Market Places.

To target specific countries:

- How to target (and exclude) specific countries.
- International procurement platforms.
- Trade missions and industry fairs.
- Local representation required?

International suppliers: although the emphasis of this Guide is on exporting, you may well also be interested in sourcing supplies from abroad. This sets out some of your options.

Target the World

Your entry portal to the global market is your website but you have to make sure that potential partners and customers can find it.

Your Website & Foreign Language SEO

90% of Europeans visit websites in their own language, even if they speak some English, and 75% of people prefer to buy in their own language. In fact, 75% to 85% of people “occasionally” or “never” use another language to search for or buy products.

Therefore, if you want your website to rank higher in foreign markets, then improving foreign language SEO is a must.

 See: Language Considerations.

If you do decide to translate your website, it is prudent to take a measured approach i.e. first of all, translate your website into the one or two languages you think will create the greatest level of traffic – and perhaps just for a limited section of your website e.g. the area where you describe your products and services. On the basis of the results that you generate here, you then can then consider:

1. Expanding the area that you have translated.
2. Adding more languages.

You should also note that improving your Foreign Language SEO is not simply a matter of translating the published content of your website. You should also:

1. **Use language-specific meta tags:** Make sure your website's meta tags (title tag, description tag, and header tags) are translated into the language you want to target. Use relevant keywords in the meta tags to improve your website's visibility in search results.
2. **Create language-specific URLs:** Use language-specific URLs for your website pages to make it easier for search engines to index your content.
3. **Build language-specific backlinks:** Build links to your website from other websites in the language you are targeting.
4. **Localise your content:** Adapt your content to the local culture and customs of the language you are targeting
5. **Use structured data markup:** This helps search engines to understand your website's content.

Make sure that you track and analyse visitors to your site. Google Analytics 4 (GA4) is the starting point for most webmasters. Again, there's plenty of advice on the internet and in YouTube covering the use of GA4.


 See: Google's own "[Introduction to Google Analytics](#)" as a good starting point.

If you do manage to track visitors to your website, then we would suggest that you import them into your CRM¹³ and target them accordingly.

¹³  See: [Communications](#) for some CRM providers.

However, translating your website into multiple languages can represent a significant investment and make updating the website problematic, time consuming and expensive.

 See: [Language Considerations](#).

 See: TradeTech's [Multilingual Microsite](#) service which offers a low cost, flexible, complementary solution.

TradeTech's Multilingual Microsites

Multilingual Microsites promote your company and its products and services in 35 languages reaching 95% of Global GDP providing a fast-track route into international markets¹⁴.

- These Multilingual Microsites sit on TradeTech's ExpoWorld platform with multiple links to your home site.
- These backlinks to your home site also increase its SEO.
- Your Multilingual Microsite pages convert prospects into leads by encouraging them to contact you for more information or a quote. These sales enquiries go directly to your website, email or telephone as you decide.

If you decide you would like to subscribe to your Multilingual Microsite use the coupon **TTS30DISCOUNT31122024** for a 30% discount.

 See: [Multilingual Microsites – What Are they?](#)

 See: [Multilingual Microsites – List Prices](#)

B2B Online Market Places

There are a number of B2B Online Market places, but you will have to review which ones, if any, are suitable for your company.

In the ExportersAlmanac we list a number of B2B Market Places and Business Networks. You will see that some are very specialised and others are much more general e.g. Amazon Business and Alibaba.

 See: [B2B Market Places and Business Networks](#).

If you find a market place that does suit you, before committing to using the service, do make sure that you check out all the services terms and conditions (especially with regard to: liabilities and payments) and ensure that you are happy with them.

Targeting Specific Countries

Even though it is possible to use techniques and services described in this Guide to sell globally without focusing on any specific country:

1. It may be desirable to target specific countries where you believe you have particular opportunities e.g. following a Virtual Trade Mission to that country.
2. You may notice a number of visitors to your website from a specific country and want to further research the opportunities in that country.

¹⁴ They also function as Virtual Stands in Virtual Trade Missions organised by TradeTech.

3. Should you be contacted by a sale's lead from a particular country, you may need to check the situation regarding tariffs¹⁵ and sanctions.
4. There may be countries which you wish to exclude from any export considerations. (Too far away, too small, sanctioned, language problems etc.)





You can use the resources described below

If you wish just to browse through country profiles to see if there are any which could interest you, then check out the countries listed The ExportersAlmanac. These Country Profiles include: General Profiles, Economic Profiles. Trade Profiles and Commercial Profiles and cover 232 countries and territories.

 See: [Country Profiles](#)

Identifying Potential Overseas Markets

The following services from the International Trade Centre (ITC)¹⁶ may help you identify those countries which offer the greatest potential for your company's products and services:

- ITCs Trade Map – Discover which countries are importing products similar to your company's.
 See: [Trade Map](#)
- ITC's Trade Competitiveness Map_ - How do products from the UK rank against overseas competition?
 See: [Trade Competitiveness Map](#)
- ITC's Export Potential Map - Are your products considered to have greater export potential?
 See: [Export Potential Map](#)
- ITC's Global Trade Helpdesk - Start exploring opportunities by choosing: (a) The country of interest and (b) the product of interest.
 See: [Global Trade Helpdesk](#)

Excluding countries from consideration

You may also exclude countries from consideration due to:

- Onerous Tariffs and\or Non-tariff barriers.
 See: [Tariffs & Non-Tariff Barriers](#).
- Sanctions and blacklists.
 See: [Blacklists & Embargoes](#)

¹⁵ **N.B.** Although exporters do not directly pay import tariffs, Importers will add them to your price in their calculations – are you still price competitive?

¹⁶ The International Trade Centre is owned by the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation – and uses the data available to these 2 organisations to provide the information services indicated here.

- Transport costs making your products non-price competitive.
- Someone else is already trading under a brand similar or the same as yours. Check with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).
 - 👉 See: [WIPO Global Brand Database](#)
- Low credit rating
 - 👉 See: [Trade Profile – Country Ratings](#)
- How difficult is it to do business there? Is there a high degree of corruption?
 - 👉 See: [Trade Profile – Corruption Perceptions Index](#)

UK Sanctions and blacklists

Referring to the UK Government’s Sanctions List and the Office of Trade Sanctions Implementation will help you ensure that none of your targets (countries and companies) are subject to UK sanctions.

👉 See: [Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation](#)

👉 See: [Office of Trade Sanctions Implementation](#)

Kompass Directory Global Coverage

You’ve identified the countries of interest and the ITC data gives the names of relevant companies in those countries, how can I reach them? Are there other relevant companies not listed in the ITC databases?

You can access the vast majority of potential buyers through the Kompass Directory (55 million companies in 70 countries):

Search the Kompass directory¹⁷ for companies that match your target markets.

👉 See: the [Free Web Search](#) - or [EasyList](#) - or the Kompass [EasyBusiness](#)


Then use the Kompass contact information you have collated to populate your sales and marketing campaign (there are tools you can use to automate the importing of data into your CRM).

👉 See: [CRM apps and connectors](#).

Trade Leads & Promotion Agencies

There are a number of resources which exist to help promote and support international trade; as well as providing (in some cases) direct trade leads.

¹⁷ If you haven’t done so already, you should also  [register](#) your company’s profile with Kompass – this will increase your advertising “reach” to international companies.

 See: [Trade Leads & Promotion Agencies](#) for more details if you think these could be of interest to you.

International Procurement Platforms¹⁸


There are specialised digital market places where buyers request bids for contracts. Registering with the following can result in sales leads being sent to you directly:

1. UK National and Regional Government Tenders;
2. EU Government Tenders;
3. ITC's Procurement Map;
4. Global Procurement Opportunities.

You should note that in order to qualify for bidding for many international contracts there are standard questionnaires which ask whether you have policies in place covering:

- The use of child labour.
- The use of slave labour.
- Anti-bribery and corruption rules.

If you do not have existing policies to show your company takes these issues seriously, you can download templates from:

 See: Workable – "[Child Labour Policy](#)".

 See: VinciWorks – "[Free Sample Template for Modern Slavery Act Statement](#)".

 See: VinciWorks – "[Anti-bribery and corruption policy](#)".

N.B. You should ensure that all your suppliers also have similar policies in place *and that they follow these policies*. You should make these conditions of your supplier onboarding process.

UK Government Procurement Sites¹⁹

Although these are not export opportunities, if you can win contracts here, then you have a chance with foreign procurement opportunities.

- **UK Government's Contracts Finder** - Contracts Finder lets you search for information about contracts worth over £10,000 with the government and its agencies.

 See: [Contracts Finder](#)

¹⁸ Many organisations (both private and public sector) advertise projects which are open to bidding or RFP (Request for Proposal). These may well represent opportunities for your company. However, as a word of caution, qualifying for and preparing responses can be a considerable drain on resources – with no guarantee of success. The smaller your company the more you should look at private tenders and/or public tenders close to your home. Another approach can be to see who wins these contracts and propose your products and services to them as a sub-contractor.

¹⁹ Not export opportunities, but we thought we'd include them anyway. If you can qualify for these, you'll have a good chance of qualifying for foreign, official procurement bids.

- **Public Contracts Scotland** - For opportunities with public sector bodies in Scotland.

 See: [Public Contracts Scotland](#)

- **eSourcing NI** and **eTendersNI** for opportunities with public sector bodies in Northern Ireland.

 See: [eSourcing NI](#)


 See: [eTendersNI](#)

- **Sell2Wales** - For opportunities with public sector bodies in Wales.

 See: [Sell2Wales](#)

EU Single Electronic Data Interchange Area (SEDIA)

SEDIA is the entry point for participants and experts in funding programmes and tenders managed by the European Commission and other EU bodies.

 See: [SEDIA](#)

ITC's Procurement Map

This is an online tool which offers information on public tenders combined with legislation on women vendors and SMEs, and sustainable standards to foster entrepreneurship.

 See: [Procurement Map](#)


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 See: [Procurement Map](#)

Global Procurement Opportunities.

The opportunities do not end just in the UK or even in the EU, there opportunities to bid for contracts throughout the world.

 See: [Procurement Opportunities](#) for list of procurement information services as well as specific opportunities in specific countries or via multinational organisations (e.g. The World Bank or the United Nations).

Kompass Global Public Tenders

This service is based on the largest global bidding platform and helps companies identify new business opportunities through access to public and private sector bids. It also helps to create connections between professionals in the same market sectors.

 See: [Kompass Global Public Tenders](#)

Trade Missions and Industry Fairs


Whichever options you choose, virtual and/or physical, a purely passive approach rarely produces economic results. To make the most of these opportunities, you should make the necessary preparations pre-event:

1. Prepare your collateral? What is needed? Introductory emails? Brochures? Price Lists? Follow-up Emails?
2. Identify and contact your targets (set up meetings)²⁰ – as soon as their details are available – tailor your message to them. If possible, make them personal and explain why you think meeting would be a good idea for both parties.
3. Prepare a post event follow up program – so that you can respond quickly after the event.

and post-event:

1. Qualify and follow up on your leads.

It helps if you prepare template collateral and operational and administrative procedures for participating in events.

 See: [Trade Events](#) and UK & [International Trade Events](#) To check out whether there is an international trade fair that makes sense for you.

Virtual Trade Missions (VTMs)

It has to be recognised that during Covid there was a rush to use online platforms to replace physical events. The experience was not totally positive. Common complaints were:

Poor User Experience: Many platforms were complex to configure and required very heavy bandwidth to navigate.

Expensive licensing: Many platforms had pricing benchmarked with physical costs rather than the actual, much lower, costs of online hosting.

Presentations were dire: Many were far too long and extremely boring.

Furthermore, these technical events were well outside the experience of traditional organisers who were only too happy to drop them and return to their familiar physical events.

However, these complaints can and are resolvable. Managed and priced correctly, VTMs as managed by TradeTech have a lot to offer British companies:

1. They are cheaper and require fewer resources.
2. No travelling is required.
3. The Virtual Stands\Multilingual Microsites support VTMs in multiple countries without additional configuration.
4. They are a valuable, low-cost entry point into multiple markets.

 See the video [The Case for Virtual Trade Missions](#).

²⁰ Lists of attendees are usually published in advance of the events themselves.

Physical Trade Missions & Industry Fairs

Notwithstanding the benefits of the VTMs, some sales and marketing processes do benefit from, if not actually require, face-to-face meetings. If you are prepared to make the investment (tens of thousands of dollars rather than a few hundred), then attending physical events may well be the right decision for you and your company.

Local Representation?

In this Guide we concentrate on how you can begin exporting without leaving your office. But once you have your “foot in the door”, in order to exploit your opportunities to the maximum, you may then indeed want to establish a direct presence in a country.

Irrespective of their size, companies can become international in different ways. These include exporting, contractual arrangements, licensing and franchising, joint ventures, strategic alliances and fully owned foreign direct investment (FDI), including greenfield investments and mergers and acquisitions.

This direct presence will depend upon a series of factors relating to your products and services e.g. is local servicing and after-sales support required? Do you need someone who represents you to a number of local buyers and distributors? Should you establish a branch? A subsidiary? Do you offer a franchise scheme? The right format for your company will depend upon the nature of your business and the level of sales that can be expected from a particular territory.


If you need a local partner, you can search for possible candidates through Chambers of Commerce and Local Business Directories:

 See: [The Commercial Contacts in the relevant Country Profile](#); and/or


 See: The [Kompass Directory](#).

If you do decide to establish a local presence, please take special care to appoint suitable overseas agents and distributors. Some may already represent your competitors, or be so busy they cannot do justice for your products. They may lack the qualifications and/or capabilities claimed, such as the ability to stock, install and service your goods.

Therefore, having found one or more candidates you may find it helpful to consider the points listed in the Agent/Distributor Qualifications Checklist.

 See: Appendix Three - Agent/Distributor Qualifications Checklist.

A final caveat: Before signing any agreement, do take local legal advice before entering into any agreement e.g. you do not want to discover that you have authorised a foreign company to incur liabilities on your behalf. We would also suggest that you are advised by a lawyer in your own country as to the questions you should ask a foreign lawyer and how to understand their answers.







 See: [Lawbite](#) may be able to provide the advice you need to control legal risks, to help you manage your employment, supply and sales relationships.

International Suppliers

Although the emphasis of this Guide is on exporting, finding foreign suppliers can reduce your costs and supply chain risk. Recent events have demonstrated the dangers of depending upon single suppliers and/or suppliers from a single country. The Supply Chain challenge for the future is how to diversify.

In this Sub-Section we set out how you can search for new suppliers without leaving your desk. These are the same techniques as described above for export markets, only this time you are looking for suppliers rather than buyers. This process should also include taking out credit references. (See: Credit Referencing.)

Shortlist international markets for potential suppliers, using:

- ITC's Export Potential Map to find the countries with the greatest potential.
 See: ITC's [Export Potential Map](#)
- ITC's Trade Map to identify those countries which export specific goods.
 See: ITC's [Trade Map](#)
- ITC's Global Trade Helpdesk– Identify specific companies supplying specific products.
 See: ITC's [Global Trade Helpdesk](#)
- Your own policy considerations - Limits on: distance, language, time zone etc.?
- Browse The ExportersAlmanac's - Country Profiles to find and/or reject countries of interest.
 See: [Country Profiles](#)
- Access and search the Kompass Directory – to find suppliers of products that interest you.
 See: [Kompass Directory](#)
- HMRC's Look Up Service - To check what import tariffs may be applicable. High tariffs would indicate a major barrier to import opportunities.
 See: [HMRC's Look Up Service](#)

If you have a number of suppliers in mind, then you may consider sending them an RFP (Request For Proposal). In these cases, you may want to use an RFP management service.

 See: [Supply Chain Solutions – RFP Platforms](#).

Finally, we suggest that you complete the UK Government's outline step by step guide to importing goods into the UK.

 See: [Import goods into the UK: step by step](#)

N.B. In addition to the referencing checks that we recommend you carry out, you should also review potential suppliers' compliance policies regarding: child labour, slave labour as well as bribery and corruption. If there are any problems with your suppliers' policies, these can represent, if not a legal liability, then certainly significant reputational risk.

 See: International Procurement Platforms

Communications - Engaging with Foreign Companies


This Section covers how you can engage and communicate directly with Foreign Companies. It outlines:

- How you can use Artificial Intelligence to support your communications.
- Digital Advertising & Marketing Opportunities.
- Sales Queries – Response Preparation.
- Language Considerations.

Artificial Intelligence

AI is already having a major impact on the eCommerce sector and therefore on international trade; at all levels and all departments. It allows you to reduce costs, increase efficiency and extend the range and frequency of your operational and administrative activities.

Please note, it is unlikely that AI will replace members of staff, it should however extend their capabilities. As an example, a Marketing Director said to us “AI will not replace Marketing Departments, however there will be no Marketing Department that does not use AI.”


 See: [ExpoUK - Artificial Intelligence](#), for a list of AI service providers, covering service providers which help you with:

- Audio & Video
- Chatbots
- Design
- Marketing
- Productivity
- Writing

Of these the most well-known is probably ChatGPT. ChatGPT is a particularly useful resource for creating marketing texts – in multiple languages. Ask ChatGPT to create the text, for example:

- Emails
- Brochures
- Web Pages
- Presentations

All you have to do is explain what you want and provide any information that you think is relevant.


 See: [ChatGPT](#)

Notes of caution:

1. If ChatGPT provides any facts or cross references, check them. ChatGPT has been known to invent facts and cross-references.
2. Do not provide any information which you consider to be secret – any information you provide can be used by ChatGPT in providing information to other ChatGPT user.
3. Review the text and edit it to better fit your requirements and reality. You know your situation better than ChatGPT.


Digital Advertising & Marketing

There is a wealth of zero to low-cost opportunities to advertise your products and services online to generate sales leads. In order for your potential clients to find your company, you will need to ensure that you are present **and** suitably profiled online.

 See: [Digital Marketing](#) for a comprehensive list of online services and resources to help your digital advertising and marketing campaigns.

However you decide to advertise your goods and services, we strongly advise you to follow the ICC's Advertising and Marketing Communications Code (Copyright © International Chamber of Commerce


(ICC) 2024 edition). It is the benchmark for almost 50 self-regulatory codes in countries around the world.

 [Click here](#) to download your free copy of the ICC Advertising and Marketing Communications Code.

Google Ads

The biggest Digital Advertising service. If you are not already using Google Ads there is plenty of advice online and on YouTube covering this service and how it can help benefit your company's sales.

 See: [Google Ads](#)

 See: Google's "[Easy-to-use for small businesses](#)" as a good starting point is Google's Introduction to its Marketing Platform

Social Media

You can use Social Media exactly the same way that you use them to advertise and market your services for domestic sales – although you will have to use the relevant local languages. The main ones to consider for international B2B advertising and marketing are:

1. LinkedIn.
2. YouTube.

If you do not use these for your domestic market, then we suggest you search for introductions explaining how to use these services. Only once you are actively using these channels for your domestic market should consider extending their reach to export markets.

In this Sub-Section we also highlight some additional options for your consideration, that may be new to you:

1. The Kompass Directory

The Kompass Directory is the world's best quality company database covering 70 countries and over 53 million companies. Used by corporate marketing and sales departments worldwide to find new partners (with over 7.5 million visitors per month to the global site), the Kompass Directory offers an unequalled resource.

You can do this in three different ways;

1. Register your company for free on Kompass.

 See: [Register your company](#)

 See the video: "[Why you should add your company to Kompass](#)".

2. Upgrade your free company profile via Booster International.

 See the videos: [How to attract new business leads to your company profile on Kompass](#) and [How to drive more traffic to your company profile on Kompass](#).)

3. Advertise on Kompass using Kompass Display Advertising.

 See: [Kompass Display Advertising](#)

2. Other Online Directories

The internet has spawned many online business directories and most, if not all, traditional print directories have migrated online. The following lists of such directories on The ExportersAlamanac may contain some relevant ones for your company:

 See: [General Business Directories](#); and

 See: [Industry Specific Directories](#)

3. Exporting is Great

If you are interested in exporting, then the Department for International Trade (DIT) offers you the possibility of [registering your company profile](#) with the government's "Exporting is Great" program; - and it's free!

 See: [Connect directly with international buyers](#).

This service:

- Lets buyers find you.
Give companies looking to buy from your industry an easy way to find you.
- Showcases your company.
Highlight your company's products and services to give buyers insight into what you do.
- Pulls in the right leads.
Attract more business by connecting with the right international buyers.

Sales Queries - Response Preparation

It is helpful to prepare in advance of receiving any enquiries from abroad, a portfolio of standard response emails and attachments for fast response to foreign requests for information:


- **Reply quickly or not at all.** Delay implies lack of interest or insensitivity to the prospect's needs. If the query comes from a country which is on your "black list", just send out a standard "thanks but no thanks" response. Politeness costs nothing and you never know – in the future the situation may change and they represent a hot prospect.
- **Answer all questions.** The enquirer may ask many questions. If one of your standard emails\attachment answers the questions, send that. If not, revise the email\attachment to answer the questions.
- **Use a business-like tone.** Impersonal form responses don't make a good impression; ensure that the responder's: name, title, and phone number are embedded in the email signature. Add customised touches to appear more directly responsive.
- **Reply in the language specified.** Most inquiries are in English. Some are in the enquirer's language but invite a reply in English (but even then, replying in their language makes a very good impression.)

You've Identified Countries and Leads. What Next?

You have to contact them. But you have to consider how best to contact them. Simply sending out standard emails saying "Buy from me" is unlikely to generate any positive results; even worse if the emails are considered to be spam, this approach can result in your emails being blacklisted.

First, consider what your products or services should be of interest to the specific target company. From this, create a proposition specifically for that company. (If you have difficulties in writing this, why not try ChatGPT to do it for you? Explain what you want to do, with the necessary information about your company and the foreign company, and let ChatGPT generate the wording of the approach.

 See: Artificial Intelligence

 See: [ChatGPT](#)

Your first contact options:

1. Directly by telephone. If you can only find the switchboard number, call and ask for someone in the relevant department you would like to contact.
2. If you have the name of an individual and their personal business email, try this. But if you do not have a personal business email or direct number, try contacting them via: (a) the switchboard (b) the general company email address or (c) LinkedIn.

Language Considerations

If you are exporting or planning to trade internationally, then you will need to translate: your product, collateral and commercial documentation and - most likely - your website and email exchanges as well.

It helps if you have in-house language capabilities, especially if you are already trading with the relevant countries; and this may well be one of the factors for choosing to concentrate on opportunities in a particular market. But, be careful, being fluent in a foreign language in social situations is not the same as writing business documentation – also in certain instances, a deep cultural awareness is necessary to communicate particular messages.

However, in the modern globalised world, language should no longer be considered a barrier to trade.

Translation Methodologies

In this Sub-Section, we cover the three translation options listing their practical pros and cons and practical applications:

1. Machine Translation.
2. Hybrid.
3. Human.

Machine Translation

AI-powered machine translation has come a long way in recent years, making it seemingly easier and more affordable for businesses and individuals to communicate with people who speak different languages. But as with any new technology, it is important to understand its limits.

When preparing text for translation, you should use:

- Simple words.

The Essential Guide to B2B International Trade

- Very simple sentences.
- Short sentences - no sentence being longer than 1 line in the text box.
- Bullet points to list key points you want to make.
- Short paragraphs to separate different concepts you want to communicate.
- Digits to express numbers rather than write them e.g. "1%" not "one percent".

You should not use:

- Complex business terms.
- Cultural or sporting references.
- Foreign words.
- Metaphors.
- Slang or jargon.
- Idioms. These rely completely on contextual and cultural understanding.

If at all possible, you should also avoid:

- Acronyms.
- Similes.
- The passive tense.
- Using the word "you". Many languages have different forms representing not just "singular" and "plural" forms but also different degrees of formality.
- Any sentences or phrases which could be ambiguous.

N.B. If you draft your description taking the above into account, not only will the translations be more accurate, but will also make it easier for English language speakers to absorb your message.

Pros of Machine Translations

- They are inexpensive – usually free of charge.
- They are easy and fast to use.
- They cover just about any language.
- They can be used for spoken translations as well as written text.

Cons of Machine Translations

- There are still significant limitations in translating complex text.

Practical Applications for Machine Translations


- Translating incoming and outgoing emails and DMs.
- Chats, short blogs and social media posts.
- Short, impromptu Speak & Translate exchanges.

Machine Translation Service Providers


Two major AI translation services are:

- DeepL²¹

²¹ DeepL currently covers 29 languages, less than Google Translate but claims to be a better translator – and provides offline services.

 See: [DeepL](#)

➤ Google Translate²²

 See: [Google Translate](#)

For speak & translate apps, these are available for your smart phone on both Google Play and Apple Store.

Hybrid Translation

Hybrid translations are first translated by machines and then checked by a qualified translator.

Pros of Hybrid Translations

- They are less expensive than “pure” human translations.
- Errors, awkward phrasing, and incorrect contextual interpretation are removed.

Cons of Hybrid Translations

- It can be difficult to find translators for every language of interest.
- Language should still be kept as simple as possible to limit the time required for human checking and correction.

Practical Applications for Hybrid Translations

- Translating web pages.
- Basic, short factual documentation.
- Instruction manuals.

Human Translation

These are translations where no machine translation is involved. A native-speaking expert will cater to cultural nuances, styling and always ensure a natural and engaging reception in a new market. Each piece of information and call to action will benefit from an international content strategy that is informed by multilingual experts who understand what phraseology will best suit their country's population.

Pros of Human Translations

- They are the only accepted versions for certain legal documentation.
- They guarantee accuracy both in terms of terminology and communication “intent”
- They can provide culturally accurate translations – so that the overall sense of the message is accurately conveyed to the reader – this is especially important when using Social Media.
- They work much better as Speak & Translate services in face to face meetings.

Cons of Human Translations


- They are the most expensive option.

²² Google Translate currently covers 243 languages.

- They are slower than AI based services, so they can be problematic for documents you expect to change often and with close deadlines.
- In the case of face-to-face meetings, the interpreter has to be booked for a precise time (and often location).

Practical Applications for Human Translations

- Notarised documentation – which can only be translated by certified translators.
- **All** legal documents. You should be aware that when translating legal terms these can be translated from a linguistic point of view but they may have no legal meaning whatsoever under another legal jurisdiction. Therefore, you may also require independent legal advice when translating legal documents.

 See: Legal Considerations.

- Formal documentation e.g. proposals.
- Key marketing documentation.
- Key face-to-face and/or video meetings and presentations.

Copywriting

Whatever solution you use, the original text is fundamental in achieving good translations. However, in the case of high-level marketing collateral where you are conveying “emotional” concepts, often the translation cannot be literal and you will need to discuss with the translator(s) what message you want to convey.


Human Translation Services - Pricing

Pricing depends upon: (a) the length of the translation (b) the languages involved (c) the complexity of the text and (d) whether it has to be notarised.

Summary

There is no doubt that Machine Translation services have progressed dramatically in quality over the past few years. They provide a perfectly adequately no\low-cost service for translating simple, basic texts in over 233 languages. However, human translators are still required when:

- More complex and culturally sensitive translations are required; or
- There is a legal requirement; or
- Face to face discussions are planned.

 See: [PAB Languages Centre](#), whatever your language needs, for a free, no obligation quote.

There are plenty of other resources available. If you would like to check these out:

 See: [Translation Services](#)

N.B. Whichever option you choose, as explained above, it is critical that the English text is well constructed. Badly prepared text will be simply made worse once translated.

Risk Reduction & Management

All commerce entails risk. Risk Reduction & Management go hand-in-hand with improved business confidence.

When you are exporting there may be new categories of risk that you will manage. Here we set out the main risks you may face and explain how you cover them

In the Introduction to the Guide, we explain how exporting can reduce your business risk. However, we also recognise that exporting can bring new categories of risk. Therefore, in this Section we cover:

- Country Risk: How can you assess this?
- Credit Referencing: How can you assess the risk of a particular counterparty?
- Debt Collection: Can you recover unpaid debts?
- Identity: Who are you dealing with?
- Insurance: Can you cover your credit risks?
- Intellectual Property: How do you protect it?
- Payment Terms: What are your options? What are your risks?
- Foreign Exchange: Are you exposed to changes in exchange rates?

N.B. You also run risks when relying on a single supplier or just a few buyers from a single country. If either of these is apply to your company:

 See: Targeting Specific Countries and International Suppliers.

Country Risk

When selling to another country, you run the risk relative to that country (“Political Risk”). Political upheavals can cause dramatic changes, including shifts in economic policy, nationalisation, expropriations, loss of personal rights, and physical danger. Political strife can prompt foreign reactions in the form of economic sanctions, boycotts, and embargoes. It is therefore important for you to compile lists of countries with which you are prepared to trade and those you are not.

1. Is the country subject to any sanctions?

 See: [Blacklists & Embargoes](#)

2. Is the political situation such that sanctions are or could become a problem?
3. Will importers be able to access the foreign exchange to pay you?

To help answer these questions, see:

- [ExportersAlmanac Country Profiles](#) – the Trade Profiles indicate whether a country is subject to sanctions and provides Credit Ratings and indicators relating to the ease of doing business as well as the Corruption Perceptions Index.

 See: [Country Profiles](#)

- The UK Government's Foreign and Commonwealth Office Overseas Business Risk Assessment. This service provides geopolitical and economic analysis on overseas markets to new and expanding exporters. The Guides also provide information on potential risks including human rights issues, bribery and corruption, terrorism, criminal activity and intellectual property.

 See: [Overseas Business Risk](#)


Of course, a country’s status can adversely change during the life of a contract, negatively impacting that contract. To cover this risk, it is possible to take out country political risk insurance cover (see below).

Credit Referencing


52% of UK companies experience late payment and 25% reported increased late payment.

 See: The [Small Business Commissioner](#).

Furthermore, 54% of European and North American SMEs experience late payments and 11% never receive payment at all²³. Therefore, before extending credit to any buyer you should get a credit reference and rating before granting any credit. The cost of the report is a small price to pay for peace of mind.

 See Appendix Seven – First Report Credit Reports. First Reports provides all the information you need to correctly estimate the risk of non-payment and to identify growth opportunities.

²³  See: [Genio](#)

 See: [Rating Agencies](#) for international credit report providers.

You can also take out trade credit insurance (see below)²⁴.

Debt Collection

Your buyer hasn't paid? You didn't take out credit insurance? It's bad news but not necessarily the end of the road. It is possible to sell your "bad debt" to a Debt Collection agency.

If this is a problem you are facing, check with a UK Debt Collection Service or one of the International Debt Collection Service Providers to see if they can help.

 See: [UK Debt Collection Service](#)

 See: [Debt Collection Services](#)

Identity

Just like in the physical world, you need to be sure who you are dealing with legally represents the company you are contracting with.

There are two considerations here:

1. The identity of the company.
2. The identity of the individual representing the company.

Whether in the digital or physical world, you should carry out the same level of due diligence regarding both sets of identity.

Company Identity


There are potentially 5 sources for checking a company's identity:

1. For most countries you can check their registration details online in the official company register.

 See [Trade Profile – Company Register](#).

2. Check their website.

3. You can also check their entry in Kompass for further details; if it is registered with Kompass.

 See: [Kompass](#)

4. You can request a Credit Report.

 See: [First Report](#)

 See: [Rating Agencies](#).

5. For EU based buyers, you should also check their VAT and EORI numbers – (which you will need in any case for commercial and customs documentation).

²⁴ You should also make sure that your invoices are correctly completed. Late payments can also be the result of incorrect invoicing.

 See: [VIES VAT number validation](#)

 See: [EORI/REX/CD validation](#)

Please note, that fraudsters are very capable of producing credible, false credentials. The more sources you can cross-check the better.

Personal Identity

Check the identity of the contact person – do they in fact represent the company you are dealing with?

1. Are they a director?
2. Are they listed on the website?
3. Can they be reached via the company's switchboard?
4. Do they have a company email address?
5. Is their LinkedIn profile validated?
6. Are you sure that you are not dealing with an Avatar?

Trade Credit Insurance

Insurance is an important and necessary element in protecting your company. To help you manage these costs, we would suggest that you take a few minutes to get some competitive quotes for:

1. **Political Risk Insurance** – as described above, your buyer may well want to make payment and/or honour the contract with you, but is not able to because of their country's political or financial position. If you need to take out insurance then check with UK Export Finance. Their mission is to ensure that no viable export fails for lack of finance or insurance – or to check the availability of private insurance.

 See: [UK Export Finance](#)

 See: [Commercial Insurance Companies](#)

2. **Trade Credit Insurance** – covering any credit you may extend. These can be offered by private insurance companies and government agencies. (See the links to UK Export Finance and the ExportersAlmanac indicated in the previous point.)

Intellectual Property (IP)

In addition to taking normal precautions about releasing confidential information to third parties, you should also:

1. Make signing Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) as a standard operating procedure when exchanging confidential information with third parties²⁵. They are legally binding and cover all parties' confidential information and set out what should be done with this information at the end of any relationship.²⁶

²⁵ If you or your potential partner(s) do not have a template NDA, you can find plenty of examples online.


²⁶ NDAs can be:

- Unilateral NDAs – two parties are involved but only one shares confidential information with the other.

2. Clearly label any copyright material with your company name, “©”²⁷ and the date **before** you distribute or share it with any 3rd party.
3. Review whether your Trade Marks, Designs and Patents are covered in any new territories you are to trade in. (Carry out a trademark search online with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) to see if something similar to your brand already exists there.)

 See: [WIPO's Global Brand Database](#)

4. Weigh up the value of obtaining a patent or trademark, against the costs involved, as part of your export plan. If you are considering registering a patent or trademark abroad check with your professional trade attorney; the one who registered your trademark or patent in the UK.

 See: [LawBite](#) - You can also discuss your situation with LawBite. A free 15 minute consultation is on offer.

Payment Terms

The payment terms agreed in a commercial contract will reflect the risks run by both supplier and buyer.

There are four primary payment terms:

1. Advance Payment\Cash.
2. Letters of Credit.
3. Documentary Collections.
4. Open Account²⁸.

You should note, however, that in exporting, advance payment is rare. Foreign buyers generally will only pay fully up front for smaller shipments. Although they might agree to a partial down payment if it is the only way to get the goods, they will usually insist on payment upon delivery, or preferably sometime after delivery. Therefore, you are likely to push for a Letter of Credit or Documentary Collection.


-
- Bilateral or Mutual NDAs involve two parties where both parties share confidential with each other.
 - Multilateral NDAs involves three or more parties, where at least one of the parties shares information with the other signatories.

²⁷ As we do in this Guide.

²⁸ If you do choose to sell on open account, then you should consider taking out trade credit Trade Credit Insurance.

Payment Method	Buyer Considerations	Supplier Considerations
Advance Payment	Least favourable. May make payment and then not receive the goods.	Most Favourable. Does not risk shipping the goods and then not being paid.
Letter of Credit	Most expensive option (bank charges) and may have to block the funds with their bank. However, payment is only made when shipping documents are delivered in good order to the bank.	Next best option. However, this mechanism can be inflexible. Payment will only be released when the relevant shipping documents have been delivered to the bank – and the details must not deviate in content from those stipulated in the Letter of Credit.
Documentary Collection	Reasonable balance. Payment will only be due when the bank has confirmed that the correct shipping documents have been delivered.	Better than Open Account. However, the risk of non-payment still exists, although the Supplier usually holds a bill of exchange which is easier to protest than a simple non-payment of an invoice.
Open Account	Most favourable. Receives the goods and then pays.	Least favourable. Ships the goods and then risks not being paid.

Table 1 - Payment Methods

 See: [Payment Methods](#) for a more detailed discussion of the options available and the considerations to be taken into account.

Warning: There are fraudsters about. Be careful about moving from Advance Payments and/or Letters of Credit to an open account system. If you do feel that you have to accept an open account agreement, then you should seriously consider taking out trade credit insurance (see above).

Foreign Exchange Risks

If you have foreign exchange (FX) denominated contracts – either issuing them or having to pay them – getting the best possible exchange rates and speed of payment gives a direct benefit to your bottom line (and cash flow). Even if you think that your FX provider is giving you the best deal, why not check this out with other FX providers?

 See: UK [FX Service Providers and Challenger Banks](#)

 See: International [FX Providers](#)

In international trade, unless countries share a currency (as in the EU), at least one of the parties has to factor in the foreign exchange exposure. One of you will be receiving or paying in foreign currency – and this represents a risk – which can be covered at a cost which in turn should be factored into the price.

 See: Cost Calculations.

There are of course scenarios where both Supplier and Buyer take a risk by denominating contracts in a currency which is foreign to both of them. However, this can work out to be the cheapest option because, for example in the case of USDs, it is easier for each party to hedge the USD risk rather than directly in currencies which are “soft” or rarely traded directly e.g. Uzbekistan Som and Cape Verde Escudos.

The main options open to hedge exchange rates are:

- **Forward contracts:** This is where a company agrees with its bank to buy or sell a certain amount of foreign exchange at a fixed price on a fixed date. (Problems can arise if the foreign currency is not bought or sold on that date.)
- **Forward options:** This is where the Buyer or the Seller has the option (but not the obligation) to buy or sell a certain amount of foreign exchange at a fixed rate.

Logistics & Supply Chain Management

If you are dealing in physical goods, then a key element in any export contract is the shipping of the goods from the Buyer to the Seller. In this Section we cover:

- Preparation for a Quote.
- Freight Forwarders.
- Authorised Economic Operators.
- Cargo Insurance.
- Export Shipping: Packaging and Marking.
- Export\Import Documentation.
- Product Packaging and Labelling.
- Supply Chain Management Platforms.

and, if you need them, also provide suggestions where you can get quotes for:

1. Transport.
2. Cargo Insurance.

Preparation for a Quote

If you have physical goods to deliver, the first decision you have to make is how to deliver them:

1. Road?
2. Rail?
3. Sea?
4. Air?
5. A combination of the above?


This will have to balance the relative importance of:


- Speed.
- Cost.


Plus, practicality & availability.

Then you need to calculate the volume of the shipment.


Cubic Meter (CBM) Calculations: To calculate a transport quote, freight forwarders will ask you for the nature of the goods to be shipped and the freight volume of the shipment. These CBM Calculator Tools are provided to you, free of charge, by IncoDocs²⁹. Best of all, there's no login or signup required!

 [Seafreight Calculator](#): Easily calculate volumes and weights for FCL and LCL shipping.

 [Airfreight Calculator](#): Optimise your air shipping by understanding volumetric weight and actual weight.

 [Parcel/Courier Calculator](#): Ensure accurate calculations for your smaller shipments.

 [Roadfreight Calculator](#): Simplify your land-based shipping logistics.


 [Railfreight Calculator](#): Accurately plan and calculate volumes and weights for rail shipments.


The IncoTerms pricing formula you decide to quote will also determine what you should pay for and what service your Freight Forwarder should provide.

 See: See: IncoTerms Pricing.

Once you have the answers to the above, you are ready to contact a local Freight Forwarder.

N.B. Whichever pricing formula you choose, it is important that you calculate the Landed Cost of Imported Products. This allows you to see how price competitive your products or services are, whether you have to directly pay all the import costs or not - you really do not want any nasty surprises.

 See: [IncoDocs step-by-step guide](#) to help you calculate your landed costs.

²⁹  See [IncoDocs](#)

Freight Forwarders

A Freight Forwarder is a third party who helps organise and coordinate shipments on behalf of businesses by contracting with one or more carriers to transport the goods. Therefore, they should be responsible for all aspects of getting your goods from your premises to wherever they should be delivered.

Transporting your products is clearly a requirement for export deliveries – and for many products the cost of delivery is a key price element.







The sooner the goods arrive, the sooner you get paid, so speed is essential. However, faster transport may cost more. The procedures, routes and rates vary with the transport mode -- truck, rail, air or sea. Use international freight forwarders to ship exports. They can:

- Compare the costs, lead times, and transit times for each transport option; select the best option; and make the booking.
- Prepare the required documentation.
- Handle the packing, marking and labelling.
- Transport the goods from the factory to the foreign destination.
- Obtain cargo insurance.
- Arrange to clear the goods through customs on arrival.

Their fees can then be factored into the final price.


 See: [Cost Calculations](#)

If you do not have a Freight Forwarder:

- You can ask individual UK Freight Forwarders for a quote.
 -  See: [UK Logistics Services](#)
- You can find international logistics companies and/or national logistics companies in the relevant Country Profile.
 -  See: [Logistics](#) for: Competitive Quotes and International Logistics Companies
 -  See: [Commercial Contacts – Logistics Companies](#) for Competitive Quotes and National Logistics Companies in specific countries.
- Ask for a quote from Freightos and its subsidiary WebCargo (even if just for comparison purposes).
 -  See: [Freightos](#) – shipments.
 -  See: [WebCargo](#) – for aircargo.
- Ask for a quote from Freight Forwarder Services (again, even if just for comparison purposes).
 -  See: [Freight Forwarder Services](#)

Authorised Economic Operators (AEOs)

In choosing your freight forwarder, an additional consideration is whether your freight forwarder is an AEO. AEOs can provide quicker and easier passage through customs. AEO accreditation is designed to simplify customs duty and tax compliance, safeguard security and support supply chain risk management. Border processes are more efficient and faster for approved businesses and their clients as they are recognised as low risk and are therefore less likely to be delayed due to examinations.


 See: TradeTech's [AEO Directory](#) for more information. (You can check whether the countries involved have AEO schemes, and if so, whether your freight forwarder has AEO Accreditation.)

 See: [Logistics](#) for more Authorised Economic Operator related Information.

Cargo Insurance

If you are responsible for insuring the value of the shipment, and your Freight Forwarder does not cover this service, then you can request quotes from FreightCover or check out international cargo insurance providers.

 See: [FreightCover](#)

 See: [Insurance – Cargo Insurance](#) for International Cargo Insurance Providers.

Export\Import Documentation


You will certainly have to process a range of documents to support your export\import activities. These will depend upon a variety of factors e.g.:


- The nature of the goods or services you are exporting.
- The exporting country.
- The importing country.
- The payment terms,

As a first step, if exporting, your buyer should be able to tell you what their requirements are. However, you can also check³⁰ the relevant requirements with:

- Your Freight Forwarder.
- Your customs broker.

For examples of Typical Export Documents and Document processing options, you should review:

 See Appendix Four – Typical Export Documents which lists the most common documents used to support international trade.

 See: Documentary Digitalisation for options relating to the digitalisation of Export\Import Documentation and its management.

³⁰ If the goods are incorrectly packaged or labelled or not supported by the correct documentation, then there is the risk that goods will be impounded by the importing country's customs authorities; and that is not in anyone's interests.

Export Shipping: Packaging and Marking

General Considerations

Exported goods face greater physical risks in transit than domestic shipments. They are more vulnerable to breakage, theft, and damage. At some ports, goods may still be loaded or unloaded in a net or by a sling, conveyor, chute, or other method, putting added strain on the package. In the hold, goods might be stacked atop each other or bump sharply against other goods in transit. Overseas, handling facilities may not be up to domestic standards, so the cargo might be dragged, pushed, rolled, or dropped. Moisture from condensation is also a danger, even if the ship's hold is equipped with air conditioning and a dehumidifier. The cargo also might be unloaded in the rain. Some foreign ports do not have covered storage facilities.

To minimise problems:

- Use strong, reinforced boxes or crates to pack the goods. Seal and fill with lightweight, moisture-resistant material. Distribute the weight evenly to brace the container.
- To deter theft, use strapping, seals, or shrink wrapping where possible.
- Don't list the contents or show brand names on the outside of the packages.
- For sea shipments, containerise your cargo whenever possible.
- For air shipments, you can use lighter weight packing, but still take precautions.

Export packages also need to be properly marked and labelled to meet shipping regulations, ensure proper handling, conceal the identity of the contents, and help receivers identify shipments. The buyer usually specifies export marks that should appear on the cargo, e.g.:

- Mark containers legibly to prevent misunderstandings and delays in shipping.
- Stencil lettering onto packages in waterproof ink.
- Markings should appear on three faces of the package -- on the top and on the two ends or the two sides.
- Old markings must be completely removed.

Product Packaging and Labelling


Any goods exported will be subject to the labelling and packaging regulations of the importing country. Therefore, these must be agreed with the importer before concluding any contract and exporting the goods concerned.

 See: [Packaging & Labelling](#).

Supply Chain Management Platforms

There are a number of platforms which help you manage your supply chain. Depending on your circumstances they can help to significantly reduce the costs of managing your supply chain – and make it much more efficient.

 See: Digital Documentation Platforms.

 See: [Supply Chain Solutions](#) for: Export Documentation Systems, Inventory Platforms, Supply Chain Platforms and Supply Chain Software.

Costs, Finance & Pricing

Understanding your cost base and then calculating export prices is a fundamental exercise for any export campaign. Here we make suggestions covering:

- Accounting Software Considerations
- Cost Calculations.
- Banking, Finance, & FX Considerations.
- IncoTerms Pricing.
- Tariffs & Non-Tariff Barriers.
- Additional Tax and Tax Reporting Considerations.






Your Accounting Software

Can your existing accounting software cope with the foreign currencies you will be dealing in? If not, you may have to upgrade the software licence or move to another provider.

 See: [Accountancy Software](#).


Cost Calculations

Export pricing usually starts with the domestic price (e.g., cost of goods, plus profit). When calculating export prices, you will then have to take the following additional costs into account:

- Any additional tax and tax reporting requirements.
- Extra bank, finance and FX charges.
- Extra documentary requirements.
 See: [Export\Import Documentation](#).
- Extra Insurance
 See: [Cargo Insurance and Trade Credit Insurance](#).
- Extra labelling and packaging requirements.
 See: [Export\Import Documentation and Product Packaging and Labelling](#).
- Legal expenses
 See: [Legal Considerations](#).
- Tariffs and Non-Tariff Barriers, if any.
- The IncoTerms price formula you use.
- Translation costs
 See: [Language Considerations](#)
- Transport – (See previous Section).

Banking, Finance & FX Considerations

If you are not getting the service you think you should have from your current bank and/or FX provide, then see if you can find an alternative from any of the sources listed here:


 See: [Finance](#) – for UK sources.

 See: [International Banks and Finance](#)

Or see if Fund Finder can resolve your financial problem, whatever it may be:

 See: [Fund Finder](#)


Currency Accounts

 See also: [Foreign Exchange Risks](#)[Foreign Exchange Risks](#).

Does your bank offer you the possibility of having accounts denominated in the currencies that you will be trading in? For example, if you receive USD from an export sale and you have to pay for some supplies in USD, it would be better to receive the export revenue in a USD account and pay your suppliers in USD from that account. If you were to convert the USD into your own currency, you will then be taking a risk on the conversion rates – and paying the bank its commission on FX conversion.

Export Finance

Do you need working capital to finance the production of the goods you are to export? Does your bank offer export finance facilities? Is there a government finance institution providing or organising export finance?

 See: [Finance](#)

 See: [Fund Finder](#)

 See: [UK Export Finance](#)

Foreign Exchange Exposure

If you have significant input costs in a particular currency, it may reduce your FX exposure by quoting your prices in that currency e.g. your machines incorporate foreign elements representing 80% bought in USD of the total value of the sales price of the machine. In this case, it probably makes sense to quote the sales price in USD.

Bank, Country and Currency Codes

It is important to be aware that Bank, Country and Currency Codes are used extensively in international trade and it is important to use them – and use them correctly. Mistakes can result in delayed payments.

 See: [Bank codes](#).

 See: [Country and Currency Codes](#).

IncoTerms Pricing

How you determine the terms and conditions of your pricing and payment profiles impact on your commercial risk. These are typically defined by IncoTerms. These are the standard contract terms used in importing/exporting sales contracts.


The pricing of a contract will reflect the costs and responsibilities of the contracting parties. The more responsibilities, the more costs you have to cover and fix in the contract. Once you have calculated your costs, and then your price you will have to decide what currency to quote – and whether you will quote different currencies for different countries.

The main options for export prices³¹:

C&F	Cost & Freight (to a named overseas port e.g. Singapore). This includes all FOB costs, plus all transportation costs to the foreign port. The buyer pays the cargo insurance, import duties and taxes to clear customs.
CIF	Cost, Insurance & Freight (to a named overseas port e.g. New York). This includes all C&F costs, plus all cargo insurance. The buyer pays only the import duties and taxes to clear customs.
DAP	Delivery At Place. The seller is responsible for the delivery of the goods to the named destination at the buyer. The costs of carrying out all the necessary import formalities are expressly excluded. These costs – including all import duties, taxes incurred when importing to the country of destination - are borne by the buyer.
DDP³²	Delivery Duty Paid (to a named place of destination e.g. DDP Sydney). This includes all CIF costs, plus any applicable import duties, taxes and other costs to clear the goods through customs.
Ex-Works	The buyer has to organise (and pay for) transport from the factory, insurance and any applicable import taxes and tariffs.
FAS	Free Alongside Ship (at a named port of export e.g. Liverpool). This includes the EX-Works price, plus your costs to transport, unload, and deliver the goods alongside the departing vessel or aircraft.
FOB	Free on Board (at a named port of export e.g. Felixstowe). This includes the FAS cost, plus the cost to load the goods onto the carrier. The buyer pays for cargo insurance, transportation to the destination, and any applicable import duties and taxes.


Tariffs & Non-Tariff Barriers

In addition to the resources indicated below, your Freight Forwarder should also be able to advise you on any relevant tariffs and Non-Tariff Barriers. Although it is unlikely that you will be responsible as an exporter for paying any import duties or incurring the costs of any Non-Tariff Barriers, you do need to take them into account when considering whether your products will be price competitive in the importing country.

 See: [Customs & Non-Tariff Barriers](#) for information provided by (1) the key international organisations and (2) commercial service providers providing detailed information services.


Tariffs

You certainly need to understand whether tariffs are applicable and how they will affect your pricing. Tariffs are payable by the importer. Therefore, whether your company will be liable for these payments depends upon whether you are the exporter or the importer. Whether tariffs

³¹  See: [Logistics IncoTerms](#) for further information regarding international pricing and payment terms.

³² We would suggest that for exports you should go no further than CIF.

are applicable and at what rate can be easily checked using online tools available via this Guide e.g. the ITC services shown below.

 See also: The UK Government's [Trade Tariff Look Up](#).

Non-Tariff Barriers

Governments use a variety of techniques other than import duties to control imports, some to limit them quantitatively (e.g. quotas); to preserve scarce foreign exchange (exchange controls); to control who can import (permitting); or to comply with health, safety or technical standards. Non-tariff barriers consist of:

1. Extra documentation requirements.
2. Embargoes.
3. Exchange controls (limiting the transfer of foreign currency out of a country).
4. Quotas.
5. Sanctions.

You should research these potential non-tariff barriers (NTBs) in each target country, e.g.

- **ITC's Market Access Map** - Review barriers to trade with the countries you are considering.

 See: [Market Access Map](#)

- **ITC's Lega Carta** - Offers a global picture of the multilateral rules that may impact your products when exported to particular countries.

 See: [Lega Carta](#)

- **ITC's Rules of Origin Facilitator** - A global resource on tariffs, trade agreements and rules of origin designed with SMEs in mind. The tool enables you in a few clicks to find out import duties in foreign markets applicable to your product, available duty savings, detailed rules of origin, and certification procedures.

 See: [Rules of Origin Facilitator](#)

- **ITC's Global Trade Helpdesk** – Shows relevant mandatory requirements for importing specific goods into specific countries.

 See: [Global Trade Helpdesk](#)

Additional Tax and Tax Reporting Considerations

Any additional taxes and tax reporting requirements that may be applicable to your company will depend upon:

- The exporting country.
- The importing country.
- The terms of any trade agreements between these countries
- Whether the trade is in physical goods or services.

- If the trade is in physical goods, the source of input contents may also be relevant (e.g. how much value add is sources from the exporting country and how much from 3rd countries – and which 3rd countries).
- The IncoTerms pricing that are applied.

N.B. In certain importing countries³³, depending upon the characteristics of your export contract, for fiscal purposes you may have to register in the importing country.

As stated on the inside page, this Guide does not provide professional advice. Therefore, we suggest that you contact, as appropriate:

- **Your Accountant.**
- **Your Freight Forwarder** (They can complete declarations with both domestic and foreign customs authorities).
- **Your Fast Parcel Operator** (They transport parcels and freight internationally within a specific timeframe. This may include customs clearance. A number have been approved by HMRC to move goods under simplified memorandum of understanding.)
- **Your Customs Agent or Broker.** (They ensure goods clear through customs, and may act as a direct or indirect representative. This may include lodging import/export customs declarations to Customs (HMRC in the UK) and facilitating the payment of import duties, VAT, excise duty etc. on behalf of importers and exporters.

VAT Considerations

Physical goods sales to the European Union

If you sell to other countries in the EU, you must keep records and submit details of these sales on your VAT return. If you have a high level of sales to EU countries, you must complete an Intrastat Supplementary declaration.

 See: [Intrastat Supplementary declaration](#)


The Brexit EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement includes a Protocol on cooperation and combating VAT, customs and excise fraud, plus mutual assistance between the EU and UK on recovering tax claims. This creates a framework between the UK and EU27 member states to assist each other in compliance with VAT legislation and protecting VAT revenues and recovering tax and duties on each other's behalf.

If UK Sellers want to keep selling directly to customers in any EU state from stocks in the UK, they must VAT register in each target country immediately. Failure to do so will trigger immediate liabilities to fines. The EU customs authorities will also challenge you as to why you are not supplying them with an EU VAT number when you are importing goods. An alternative is to move a proportion of UK-held stocks to somewhere in the EU and sell on a distance selling-basis from there. Furthermore, UK businesses with an EU VAT registration will also need a Fiscal Rep in up to 19 of the EU 27 countries These requirements have resulted in smaller traders no longer exporting to the EU.

However, one option is to outsource all of this to Avalara. They can provide **VAT Registration and filing service** with a single point of contact for all countries across the world, with local

³³ Fiscal representatives for processing VAT or GST are not only required for EU countries but also Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, Japan, South Africa, Australia and South Korea. – More can be expected to be added to that list.

specialists. Avalara VAT Registration allows you to register for VAT in over 70 countries, with an easy-to-manage process workflow.

 See: [Avalara](#)

EU sellers using their local VAT numbers to sell to UK customers, now have to apply for a UK VAT registration number immediately or risk incurring UK fines and penalties. This – and the additional shipping costs – has resulted in some EU sellers now refusing to sell to UK customers.

Physical goods sales to non-European Union Companies

If you sell to countries outside the EU, you must keep documents that count as proof of export. These must identify:

- The exporter.
- The customer.
- The goods and their value.
- The export destination.
- The mode of transport and the route.

In most cases, goods you export will be zero-rated for VAT. You should check with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) if you have any questions.

 See: [HM Revenue and Customs \(HMRC\)](#)

Documentation & Digitalisation

In the Section covering Logistics & Supply Chain Management we refer to the documentation typically required to support the export of physical goods. In this Section we cover:

- Documentary Digitalisation – and its benefits.
- Codes used in international trade – these greatly facilitate the use and cross-reference of digital documents.
- eInvoicing – internationally, the most widely digitalised document.
- eSignatures – how documents can be legally signed digitally.
- Legal Considerations – Not just for digitalisation, but also general considerations.
- Digital Documentation Platforms – 2 suggested platforms for your consideration.

Documentary Digitalisation

For centuries, trade and trade finance transactions have been recorded in paper documents. Cross-border trade transactions involve vast numbers of these paper documents that must pass through the hands of many parties. This process is slow, inefficient, costly, error and fraud prone, environmentally unsound and contributes to a trade finance gap of up to US\$2.5 trillion affecting mainly SMEs.³⁴

- **Digitisation** is the process of converting information on paper or pdf files into digital form that can be processed by a computer - and is therefore the first, necessary step in digitalising business processes.
- **Digitalisation** is the use of digitised data to convert (manual) business processes through the use of digital technologies.³⁵

The benefits of digitalisation are many (and will depend upon the manual processes being converted) but can be summarised as follows:

- **Cost Reductions:** - Processing data digitally is far more efficient, more productive and faster than using manual processes.
- **Disaster Recovery:** - It is much easier to copy and back-up data.
- **Improved Data Access:** - The information in documents can be published and shared in a number of ways - and is no longer restricted by location.
- **Integration:** - Records can be integrated and shared with digital systems - eliminating the need for data re-entry.
- **(Near) Elimination of Errors:** - Automatic checks and controls can be employed to ensure that incorrectly formatted data cannot be entered into the system.
- **Searchability:** - It makes finding relevant content much easier and maximised research efficiency.
- **Stronger Resource Management:** - Digitalisation consolidates information and provides a central basis for the deployment of Business Intelligence tools.

Codes Used in International Trade

Codes are used extensively in international trade documentation. These main ones can be found on the ExportersAlmanac:

 See: [Bank, Corporate, Industry & Product Codes](#)



 See: [Country, Location & Currency Codes](#).

Of these:

Bank & Currency Codes

BICs, Fedwire and IBANs are the most important codes used in international trade to identify banks, branches and bank accounts for the routing of payments. Currency codes are important

³⁴  The [UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records 2017 \(MLETR\)](#) aims to resolve these issues.

³⁵ The ICC is heavily involved in these developments. To find out more  see: [Digital trade](#) and  [the ICC Centre for Digital Trade & Innovation](#).

in ensuring you get paid in the correct currency. – Make sure that these are correctly included in your invoices.

Economic Operator Registration and Identification (EORI) numbers

If you are trading with, or thinking of trading with, the EU, you will need an EU EORI³⁶ number for:

- Customs declarations to move your goods into EU.
- Correspondence and rulings from EU customs.



See: [Economic Operators Registration and Identification number \(EORI\)](#).

Industry Codes

Industry Codes are particularly important when searching international directories for potential partners – and ensuring that your company is also correctly classified.



See: [Industry Codes](#)

Product Codes

Product Codes are particularly important elements for completing import and export documentation. They determine if any tariffs or quotas will apply to the trade. Any mistakes in these codes can result in: delays, fines or the incorrect imposition of tariffs.



See: [Product Codes](#)

eInvoicing

Of all the documentation used in international trade, electronic invoicing or, click-to-pay invoicing, is the most widespread. eInvoicing involves sending your customers an invoice by email often with an online payment option to pay with a few clicks.³⁷


Although most companies now use software to issue and process invoices, the reality is that much of business is still driven by paper and pdf documentation. What can you do about it? What will be right for your company will depend largely upon:


- The types of documents that you are processing.
- The volumes of documents that you are processing.
- The legal status of eInvoices in your country and that of your clients.

There are many, many e-Invoice solution providers. However, if you are still looking for a provider:



See: [eInvoice Solutions](#).

³⁶  [Avalara can help you](#) if you need help in applying for an EU EORI number.

³⁷  [ICC Genesis is](#) ICC's new digital trade tool streamlines the invoice self-declaration process between countries which have concluded a Free Trade Agreement.

eSignatures³⁸

eSignatures are now recognised under English Law³⁹. In fact, from a number of points of view, they are preferable to signatures written by hand. This greatly facilitates B2B eCommerce allowing for the electronic exchange of signed commercial documents.


Here we set out what eSignatures are and what practical benefits they offer – together with some considerations you should take into account when using them.


There are three categories of eSignatures:

1. Simple Electronic Signatures.
2. Advanced Electronic Signatures (AdES) is an electronic signature that has met the requirements set forth under EU Regulation No 910/2014.

 See: [EU Regulation No 910/2014](#)

3. Qualified Electronic Signatures (QES) guarantee the authenticity, integrity and non-rejection of electronic documents. It is also possible to use the Portable Document Format (PDF) signature format:

 See: [EU/EEA Trusted List Browser](#). This provides the list of qualified trust service providers established in the European Union.

 See: The [specifications of the PDF format](#) necessary for the development of further verification products and digital signature generation.


The terms used above may seem unusual and complex. However, the rationale behind these services is very simple to facilitate trade by:

1. Reducing costs.
2. Providing greater efficiency gains.
3. Increasing trust between parties that may not know each other.
4. Improving user experience.
5. Increasing security and liability.

eSignatures and Cross-Border Documentation - Considerations

Although many countries now have legislation in place authorising the use of eSignatures – indeed the EU has issued directives covering the whole of the EU to that effect. The implementation of such legislation does not necessarily precisely reflect UK law. Therefore, we would also suggest that you take legal advice before relying on the acceptance of cross-border eSignatures.


³⁸ First of all, these are *not* scanned copies of written signatures.

³⁹  See: [The Electronic Identification and Trust Services for Electronic Transactions \(Amendment etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019](#). As an EU member-country, England, Wales and Northern Ireland have legally recognised eSignatures since 2002, with the Electronic Signatures Regulations, established after the passing of the EU Directive in 1999. This has now been superseded by the eIDAS (electronic identification and trust services) Legal advice must be taken if electronic signatures issued by UK qualified trust service providers are used to sign documents in EU member states.

 See: [Lawbite](#) – they will give you a free 15 minute consultation.

There are a number of companies that provide eSignature services:

 See: the [UK Government's Digital Marketplace](#) which lists eSignature Service providers in the UK.

 See: [eSignature Solutions](#) for international service providers.


Legal Considerations⁴⁰

Contractual documentation is one area which causes problems and misunderstandings between potential partners. To reduce these issues to a minimum is to use [ICC model contracts and clauses](#). These have been drafted by legal experts from across ICC's worldwide network, providing balanced, neutral templates. (As with any models, they should be checked before signature by a lawyer to ensure compliance with relevant local legal and regulatory requirements.) Unlike many other organisations' models, ICC models do not favour any industry sector, geography, or category of parties (such as sellers or buyers).⁴¹

 See: [ICC model contracts and clauses](#)

 See: [Legal & Accounting Resources](#) – Template Contracts for further suggestions for standardised, neutral contracts.

If you're happy with the legal support that you are receiving, that's good. If you're looking for something more, then the following should help:

- UK Legal Advice.
- Foreign Legal Advice.
- Official Translations.  See Language Considerations - Notarised documentation.

UK Legal Advice

LawBite uses the latest on-line tools and advanced data science to streamline the client-lawyer experience. This means we can handle your legal case faster and also cheaper, 50% the cost of comparable legal advice on the high street. For a 15-minute free, no commitment, consultation with an expert lawyer.

 See: [Lawbite](#).

Or if you prefer, check the Law Society's directory of solicitors:

 See: [Find a Solicitor](#)

N.B. The Law Society does not provide legal advice.

⁴⁰ N.B. TradeTech Solutions Ltd does not offer any legal advice.

⁴¹ Should they be needed (hopefully not), included in this documentation are options for dispute resolution include renowned ICC Arbitration or litigation in national courts.


 See: [The Law Society Guides to common legal issues](#) for information about getting advice from a solicitor.


Foreign Legal Advice

You can also find solicitors based overseas using Law Society's online Find a Solicitor search tool, by selecting the appropriate country from the drop-down list in the search form.

 See: [Find a Solicitor](#)

Other solutions to find a foreign lawyer:

 See: [Legal & Accounting Firms](#) for links to major international legal firms.

 See: [Commercial Contacts](#) – Law Associations & Firms for links to national law associations and firms in each country.

Digital Documentation Platforms


Digitalising trade makes it cheaper, faster simpler and more secure.⁴² If you are interested in digitalising your documentary processes, you may consider checking out IncoDocs - Export Documentation Made Easy.

 See: Appendix Five – IncoDocs - Export Documentation Management Platform.

IncoDocs provides various software, tools and resources to help SME Importers & Exporters be successful in Global Trade. Use the tools and calculators covering:

- Sales & Export Documentation software
- Landed Cost Calculator
- CBM Calculators
- Information & Resources

 See: Preparation for a Quote.


 See: [IncoDocs step-by-step guide](#) to help you calculate your landed costs.

Blockchain\ Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT)

Blockchain is the technology behind cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin. However, the technology developments relating to trade raised here are not in connection with cryptocurrencies but how the technology could be used to improve the flow of international trade documentation. The term more widely used in this connection is “Distributed Ledger Technology” rather than blockchain – but they are interchangeable.

The tamper-proof and decentralised nature of DLT makes it useful for breaking the silos that constrain international trade. Many projects that were at an exploratory level in 2019 have matured and reached the production stage.


⁴²  See [ICC UK's Digital Trade](#).

 See: the WTO and Trade Finance Global's video "[Blockchain & DLT in Trade: Where do we stand?](#)"

The potential benefits of DLT can be summarised as follows:

- Elimination of content conflict between documentation covering the same shipment.
- Faster border crossing processing.
- Faster payments.
- Total transparency and clarity – to all aspects of the documentation.
- Increased use of artificial intelligence to facilitate processing and administration.
- Better statistical analysis – in real-time.

For an example of the practical implementation of DLT, see CargoLedger - the blockchain solution for the supply chain.

 See: Appendix Six – Blockchain Documentation Management Platform.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Conclusions:	<p>There is potential for SMEs in international markets – it just requires careful planning and a step-by-step approach.</p> <p>The 6 key challenges to International Trade are indeed surmountable.</p> <p>The first steps do not require significant financial investments – possibly less than expected.</p>
Recommendations:	<p>Complete the Export Readiness Assessment Form.</p> <p>Prepare your Export Plan.</p> <p>Decide whether to proceed.</p> <p>If you do decide to proceed, implement it step-by-step.</p>

Conclusions

In the Foreword and Introduction, we claim that this Guide:

- Explains the potential for SMEs in B2B International Trade.
- Sets out the steps to take to benefit from this potential – whether your company is new to exporting or is looking to increase export sales.
- Sets out how SMEs can overcome the 6 key challenges to International Trade.



Figure 2 - The 6 Key Challenges to International Trade - Solved

Assuming that your company is active in a sector which can export its products and/or services, then you will have seen that these claims are borne out. Moreover, the first steps to extend your market reach beyond the UK are not onerous – although you must dedicate the necessary time and resources.

You will also have seen that the size of your company today is largely irrelevant. The necessary tools, resources and supporting services are available to all companies. The opportunities are there, the only limit is the limit of your ambition.

Recommendations

Whether you have already exported and want to expand your overseas sales or are completely new to the international market, we recommend that you take things step by step.

1. Complete the Export Readiness Check List to begin preparing your Export Plan.

➤ See: Appendix One - Export Readiness Check List

2. A few words of caution, before implementing any such Export Plan, you should assess:

- Are you committed to exporting? – If not, it's better not to start.
- What external support will you need – and who will provide this?

The Essential Guide to B2B International Trade

- Do you have adequate resources - finances, personnel, production facilities?
 - What do you expect from export markets? – It is helpful to have clear goals.
 - How much do you expect to invest? – And do you have the resources?
 - Have all the key people in your business agreed? – You'll need the support of your team.
3. Whether you are new to exporting or are more experienced, your first steps should be those outlined in Your Company Profile and then move forward.

 See: [Your Company Profile](#).

If you need professional advice or training on any aspect or at any phase of your Export Plan, then do speak to the appropriate professional(s). Check out the following where you can find links to relevant organisations providing consultancy and training support.

 See: [Domestic support organisations](#) for British exporters.

 See: [Country specific support](#) for British exporters inside the UK as well as abroad.


 See: [Support Services for your exports](#) - international support services.

We are not claiming that there is a magic wand. Developing export markets will take effort. However, if you have decided that there are opportunities for you, don't delay any longer – the biggest prizes will go to those who grab the opportunities the fastest!

N.B. Don't forget to subscribe to TradeTech's Multilingual Microsites – use the coupon **TTS30DISCOUNT31122024** for a 30% discount on the list price.

 See: [Multilingual Microsites – What Are they?](#)

 See: [Multilingual Microsites -Pricing](#)

Finally, if we are missing anything here which would help you, please just  [email our helpdesk](#) and we'll do our best to find the answer for you.

Appendices

For your further reference:

Appendix One	Export Readiness Check List
Appendix Two	Online Reference Resources
Appendix Three	Agent/Distributor Qualifications Checklist
Appendix Four	Typical Export Documents
Appendix Five	IncoDocs Export Documentation Management Platform
Appendix Six	Blockchain Documentation Management Platform
Appendix Seven	First Report Credit Reports

Appendix One - Export Readiness Check List

We have made this as comprehensive as possible and therefore not all sections may be relevant for you. The heading in each section refers to the relevant sub-section of this Guide.

First Steps

Your Company Profile	
Have you checked your profile in Companies House?	
Have you checked your Credit Profile?	
Have you checked your profile in Kompass (and other Business Directories)?	
Have you reviewed your website and carried out an SEO audit?	
If you have industry certifications, are these publicised in your marketing collateral and on your website?	
Are your business email addresses linked to your business domain?	

Table 2 - Company Profile Check list

Competitor Comparative Analysis	
Have you analysed your competitors – actual and potential?	
How do your products and services compare?	
Will your products need to be modified for export markets to respond to local market requirements, regulations or competition?	
What advantages do you think your offering has in the particular overseas market?	
How will you position your product?	

Table 3 - Competitor Comparative Analysis

Connecting Buyers & Suppliers

Target the World	
Do you have foreign language versions of your website? If so, have you maximised their foreign language SEO.	
Have you subscribed to TradeTech Solutions' Multilingual Microsite?	
Have you reviewed the B2B Online Market places? Anything for you?	
Are you analysing traffic to your web site and responding to visits from foreign visitors?	
Do you import data from your visitors into your CRM?	

Table 4 - Target the world check list

Targeting Specific Countries	
Have you chosen a shortlist of countries that interest you?	
Have you chosen the countries you would exclude?	
Have you created a list of potential targets from ITC? From Kompass?	
Have you generated template contact content? From ChatGPT?	

Table 5 - Targeting specific countries check list

Trade Leads & Promotion Agencies and International Procurement Platforms	
Are any of these of interest to you?	
If you are considering these, or selling to large multinationals do you have the necessary: child labour, slave labour and anti-bribery & corruption policies in place?	

Table 6 - International Procurement Platforms check list

Trade Missions and Industry Fairs	
Will you be attending any?	
If so, do you have sufficient operational procedures in place?	
Do you have template material for pre and post event contacts?	
Do you have a template program for managing the operational and administrative aspects of attending Trade Missions?	

Table 7 - Trade Missions and Industry Fairs check list

Local Representation?	
Are there any countries where you would want local representation?	
Have you decided which form of representation would best suit your requirements?	

Table 8 - Local representation check list

International Suppliers	
Would it be advantageous to find new supplies abroad?	
If so which products or services – and which countries?	

Table 9 - International suppliers check list

Communications – Engaging with Foreign Companies

Artificial Intelligence	
Have you decided to use it? Which services? For what support activities?	

Table 10 - Artificial Intelligence check list

Digital Advertising & Marketing	
Do you use Google Ads for domestic sales? Would you consider using Google Ads for foreign sales?	
Do you use Social Media to support your domestic sales? Would you consider using Social Media for your international advertising & marketing?	
Have you registered your company with the Kompass Directory?	
Have you registered with other online business directories?	

Table 11 - Digital Advertising & Marketing check list

Sales Queries - Response Preparation	
Do you have your response policy in place? Do you have standard responses and sales qualification procedures ready?	

Table 12 - Sales Queries - Response Preparation check list

You've Identified Countries and Leads. What Next?	
Do you have your direct contact policies and collateral ready?	
Do you qualify your sales leads? When?	

Table 13 - You've identifies countries and leads - what next? check list

Language Considerations	
What internal language expertise do you have? To what level?	
Have you decided which languages you will want to support?	
Have you assessed the level of foreign language support you will need for these? And how this should be sourced?	

Table 14 - Language considerations check list

Risk Reduction & Management

Country Risk	
Have you carried out a risk assessment of countries you may trade with?	
Do you have a policy of credit referencing potential suppliers\buyers\partners?	

Table 15 - Country risk check list

Credit Referencing	
Do you\should you carry out credit references on your Buyers? Suppliers?	
Have you chosen a credit referencing agency?	

Table 16 - Credit referencing check list

Debt Collection	
If needed, do you have access to an international debt collector?	

Table 17 - Debt collection check list

Identity	
Are set up to confirm electronic identities? Corporate and personal?	

Table 18 - Identity

Trade Credit Insurance	
If needed, have you taken out adequate insurance to cover international trade credit risks?	

Table 19 - Trade Credit insurance check list

Intellectual Property (IP)	
Do you have standard NDAs available? A policy of when they should be exchanged?	
Have you correctly marked any copyright material?	
Do you have any registered trademarks or patents? Are these also registered abroad? In countries you are interested in trading with?	

Table 20 - Intellectual property check list

Payment Terms	
What are your preferred payment Incoterms?	
Will you have to quote prices in foreign currencies? Different currencies for different countries?	
Do you have any input costs in foreign currencies?	
If dealing with FX, do you take out forward FX contracts?	

Table 21 - Pricing and payment terms check list

Logistics & Supply Chain Management

Logistics & Supply Chain Management	
How will you transport your goods?	
Have you chosen an IncoTerms pricing formula?	
Do you already have a freight forwarder?	
If your Freight Forwarder does not arrange cargo insurance, do you have access to a suitable insurance broker or insurance company?	
Any issues regarding import\export documentation?	
Any issues regarding export shipping, packaging and marking?	
Any issues regarding product packaging and labelling?	
Do you use or need a Supply Chain Management Platform?	

Table 22 - Logistics and supply chain management check list

Costs, Finance & Pricing

Your Accounting Software	
Can it cope with foreign currencies?	

Table 23 - Your accounting software check list

Cost Calculations	
Do you have a formula for calculating your export prices? Covering all the additional costs?	

Table 24 - Cost calculations check list

Banking, Finance & FX Considerations	
Does your bank offer multi-currency accounts? Have you opened any?	
Do you need Export Finance? Does your bank provide this service?	
Have you spoken to your bank, or other FX provider, regarding any foreign exchange exposure you may have?	

Table 25 - Banking, Finance and FX considerations check list

IncoTerms Pricing	
Have you decided which terms you will apply for which buyers?	

Table 26 - IncoTerms pricing check list

Tariffs & Non-Tariff Barriers	
Any likely issues? If so, can your freight forwarder advise you?	

Table 27 - Tariffs & Non-Tariff barriers check list

Additional Tax and Tax Reporting Considerations	
Have you checked with your accountant? Freight Forwarder? Fast parcel Operator? Or Customs Agent\Broker? for any additional tax or tax reporting considerations that may apply?	

Table 28 - Tax and tax reporting considerations check list

Documentation & Digitalisation

Documentary Digitalisation	
Do you have systems to generate and manage digital documents?	
If not, will you need to implement such a system? If so, which one? For which documents?	

Table 29 - Documentary Digitalisation check list

Codes Used in International Trade	
Are you familiar with all the code systems used in International Trade?	
Do you use them within your own documentation systems?	

Table 30 - Codes used in international trade check list

eInvoicing	
Can you issue eInvoices?	
Can you receive and process eInvoices?	

Table 31 - eInvoicing check list

eSignatures	
Can you check eSignatures?	
Can you issue eSignatures?	

Table 32 - eSignatures check list

Legal Considerations	
Have you had legal advice regarding your export contracts?	
If you are considering to have a local presence, have you had local legal advice?	
Have you had legal advice regarding digital documentation and eSignatures?	

Table 33 - Legal considerations check list

Digital Documentation Platforms	
Do you use a digital documentation platform?	
Is blockchain solution of interest to you?	

Table 34 - Digital documentation platforms check list

Recommendations - Assuming you'd like to proceed	
What external support will you need – and who will provide this?	
Do you have adequate resources - finances, personnel, production facilities?	
What do you expect from export markets? What is the minimum sales level necessary to make an export campaign interesting for you?	
How much do you expect to invest? Are you committed to exporting?	
Have all the key people in your business agreed?	

Table 35 - Recommendations check list


Appendix Two – Online Reference Resources

TradeTech's ExportersAlmanac provides the following reference resources:

Bank, Corporate identifiers & Tax Codes, Industry and Product Codes

 See: [The ExportersAlmanac](#).


Blacklists and Embargoes

 See: [Check](#) whether a potential partner is subject to any such order. If in doubt, please seek advice.


Country & Currency Codes, IATA Codes and UN Locations Codes

 See: [The ExportersAlmanac](#).

Customs and Non-Tariff Barriers

 See: [The ExportersAlmanac](#) for information provided by the key international organisations and (2) commercial service providers providing detailed information services.


Glossaries

 See: [2 comprehensive Glossaries](#) covering eCommerce and Trade and Trade Finance.


Packaging

 See: The [international standards](#) used in packaging.

Standards Bodies

 See: [International bodies](#) which issue standards affecting international trade.

Domestic Support for UK Exporters

 See: [ExportersAlmanac for UK Exporters](#): Domestic Support Organisations, Finance, Government Support, Industry News & Support, UK Logistics Services, Overseas Support, Reference Resources and Support Services.

Overseas Support for UK Exporters

 See: [Country specific support](#) for British exporters inside the UK as well as abroad.

Appendix Three - Agent/Distributor Qualifications Checklist

Consider these factors in evaluating prospective overseas representatives. Their significance varies with the products and countries involved and the needs of the company seeking a representative.

Sales Force	
Number and location of sales staff.	
Would the rep need more staff to service your account?	
Would it be willing add staff?	
How are their sales staff compensated?	
Are any incentive or motivation programs offered?	
How are their sales staff trained?	
Would it pay or share costs of locally based or dedicated online training if needed?	

Table 36 Sales Force Check List

Sales Performance	
Sales volume for the past five years.	
If sales are growing, why? If not, why not?	
Sales goals for next year; based on what assumptions?	
What sales volume does it foresee for your products?	
Based on what?	
Is this adequate?	

Table 37 Sales Performance Check List

Territorial Coverage	
Current territory served.	
Is that the coverage you need?	
How does it serve more distant areas within its territory -- resident staff, branch offices?	
Would it be willing to strengthen coverage in areas you consider important?	

Table 38 Territorial Coverage Check List

Companies/Products Represented	
How many and whose/products does it currently represent?	
Is this a manageable level?	
Would you be the primary supplier?	
What priority would you receive?	
Would your products fit well in this mix?	
Do you compete with any of the companies/products represented?	

Table 39 Companies/Products Represented Check List

Customer Profile	
What end-use sectors does it mainly sell to?	
Are these the right targets for you?	
Who are its key accounts?	
What share of sales do they represent?	
Do they make sense for you too?	

Table 40 Customer Profile Check List

Facilities and Equipment	
Communications facilities and preferred methods -- phone, fax, cable, E-mail, other?	
Warehouse and stocking capacity?	
Is there enough for you, if you need it?	
Customer support facilities/capabilities. Can it install and service your products if needed?	
Training facilities/capabilities.	
Can it train users if needed?	

Table 41 Facilities and Equipment Check List

Localisation Capabilities	
Can it translate your sales literature and ad copy if needed?	
Can it alter the packaging or the product itself if needed to meet local requirement or tastes?	

Table 42 Localisation Capabilities Check List

Market Development Capabilities	
Market research -- Does it conduct or use market research in decision-making?	
Can it help you assess your market potential?	
Promotion -- Does it promote itself and the products it represents?	
What promotional literature is used for this?	
What promotional media are used?	
How are the results measured?	
How much is spent on each method?	

Table 43 Market Development Capabilities Check List

Appendix Four – Typical Export Documents

The Standard Documentation Requirements that you can expect are:

1. ADR Certificate

ADR certification is required when transporting hazardous goods within Europe. ADR stands for “Accord européen relatif au transport international des marchandises Dangereuses par Route”, which is French for a European agreement concerning the international carriage of dangerous goods by road.

 See: [What is ADR?](#)

2. Air Waybill


This is a negotiable bill for the goods that are shipped on a plane.

3. ATR Certificate

An ATR certificate is a customs document used for trade between countries in the European Union (EU) and Turkey. The certificate allows specific types of items to be imported duty-free between the two parties.

4. Certificate of Analysis (COA)

A document certifying that specific goods have been subjected to specific testing and have yielded specific findings. Food products, wines and spirits, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals are among the most common items for which a certificate of analysis is issued.

 See: [Quality Control & Certification](#) for a list of companies providing these services.

5. Certificate of Free Sale

A certificate of free sale is sometimes called a certificate for export and a certificate to foreign governments. It is evidence that goods like food items, cosmetics, medical devices, or biologics are legally free for sale in the open market and have no restrictions. The goods have approval from the regulatory authorities in the country of origin.

6. Certificates of Origin

This document includes information about the country from where the goods originated. The certificate of origin comes into use when it has the signature of a semi-official organisation, like a chamber of commerce or a consulate officer.

7. CIM consignment note

A CIM consignment note gives details of the goods being transported by rail.

8. CMR

A CMR consignment note is a document used for the regulation of road freight transport. (An eCMR is simply a digital version of the paper CMR.) The document has been adopted by most of the European states with the purpose of regulating legal issues concerning road freight transportation.

The following details must be included in the CMR document:

- The name and address of the transport company, as well as the consignee.
- The date and location where the document was completed.
- The description of the transported goods and the packaging method.
- The weight of the goods; the charges associated with the goods.
- The information regarding dangerous goods.

9. Commercial Invoice

The commercial invoice for international trade looks very different from the commercial invoice you use for domestic.

Export commercial invoices and invoices are likely to cover:

- Order number
- Purchase order number
- Customer reference number
- Banking and payment information
- Detail, value, and quantity of products or goods.

10. Dangerous Goods Forms

These forms are required to ship dangerous goods.

11. e-ADs

Under EMCS⁴³ a movement of excise goods is documented at every stage through an electronic Administrative Document (e-AD), for duty suspension goods, or through an electronic Simplified Administrative Document (e-SAD) in the case of duty paid movements.

12. Export Licence

Export licences may be special national requirements for some controlled goods, such as firearms, medicines, plants and animal products.

👉 See: The [UK Government's Step by Step guide](#) for exporting goods into the UK.

13. Fumigation Certificate

A fumigation certificate is an approval document issued by the licensing authority to indicate that shipment and shipping materials have been properly fumigated. The certificate typically contains details about the fumigation of imported goods such as the purpose of treatment, the type of fumigants used, and the temperature range that was applied.

14. Import Licences

Certain goods require the importer to obtain a licence or certificate from various UK government departments. This includes animals, plants, agricultural products, medicines, chemicals and weapons.

👉 See: The [UK Government's Step by Step guide](#) for importing goods into the UK.

15. Inland Bill of Lading

This document is for the export of goods between the exporter and the shipper of the goods. This document includes the name of the delivery state for goods. It is also a receipt to confirm that goods are not in the warehouse and successfully picked up for delivery.

16. Ocean Bill of Lading

There are two ocean bills of lading to export your goods by ocean vessel. A straight bill of lading is not negotiable and is signed by a specific consignee. A negotiable bill of lading is a document to prove that the ownership of the product or good is successfully transferred to another person and forwarded to the bank of the buyer.

⁴³ The Excise Movement and Control System is a computerised system for recording and monitoring the movement of excise goods (alcohol, tobacco and energy products) in the territory of the EU.

17. Packing List

An export packing list is a crucial international trade document for freight forwarders, banks, and customs officials. A freight forwarder requests an export packing list because with the help of the information included in the packing list, he will know about the bills of lading for the shipment.

Furthermore, a customs official needs an export packing list to know what they should check.

Typically, packing lists include the following details:

- Items in the shipment.
- Packages net, gross weight, and dimensions.
- Special safety instructions for delivery of the goods.

In case of any damage or loss of cargo and disagreement between the carrier and exporter, the company files an insurance claim on the bases of the packing list.

18. Transport Order

A transport order is a document which indicates the completion of an agreement between the ordering party and the carrier. In essence, the transport order is an instruction to move goods or materials from a source storage unit to another within a specific time.

19. Phytosanitary Certificate

The Phytosanitary Certificate (PSC) is a government-issued certificate for the exporting of plants, plant products, or other regulated items. PSCs are provided to show that consignments meet the importing country's phytosanitary import criteria. (ePhyto is short for “electronic phytosanitary certificate”.)

20. Proforma Invoice

A proforma invoice is a quote provided by the company to the buyer in an international transaction. A proforma invoice is necessary for the international prospect, which is vital for calculating financing, opening a letter of credit, applying for import licences, etc., and documents used in international trade.

A complete proforma invoice looks like a commercial invoice, which includes the following details.

- The details, like who is the buyer and seller in the transaction.
- Complete information on the goods or services, like the price and quantity for international trade.
- The source used for payment.
- The delivery details of the goods or services, like the location and source of delivery.
- The currency used for payment.

N.B. Make sure that you add the expiration date of your proforma invoice.

21. Proof of insurance

You may need to insure the goods, and you may also be required to provide proof of insurance to your customer, particularly if you are passing on the costs.

22. Shipper's Letter of Instruction (SLI)

This document comes into use to process the export with a freight forwarder. Depending on your terms of the sale agreement, the SLI includes all the necessary information required for successful transport of an international trade. The SLI includes a limited Power of Attorney, providing authority to someone to complete the shipment on your behalf.

Appendix Five – IncoDocs - Export Documentation Management Platform

 See: [IncoDocs - Export Documentation Made Easy](#) if you are interested in digitalising your documentary processes:

IncoDocs streamlines your workflows and reduces compliance risk, empowering you and your team to focus on growing your business. How can IncoDocs help your business?

- **Templates for Sales & Shipping:** - From Quotes & Proforma Invoices to Commercial Invoices, Certificates of Origin, Bills of Lading, Packing Lists and Shipper's Letter of Instruction, IncoDocs lets you create all the documents you need to run your sales & export operations in one place.
- **Create Error-Free Documents Fast:** - It could take you minutes instead of hours to create sales and shipping documents. A modern user interface designed for speed and simplicity lets you rapidly select and fill out data in a few clicks.
- **Automate Data Re-Entry with Smart Autofill:** - Manually re-entering key information is costing you time, money and putting your business at risk. With IncoDocs, key information will flow through other documents in a set to ensure it is consistent and accurate. If something were to change, simply update it in one spot and let Smart Autofill do the heavy lifting.
- **Sign & Stamp Digitally:** - Go paperless and avoid the time-consuming print-sign-scan workflow. Add a professional digital company stamp & signature onto your documents at the click of a button, all within your browser.

You can customise IncoDocs to meet your needs:

- **Customise Templates to your Requirements:** - IncoDocs provides a growing library of sales and export document templates which you can easily customize to suit your business' requirements. Documents can be also be created in multiple languages. Setup your own templates in minutes.
- **Showcase your Professional Brand:** - Add your own company branded letterhead and footer to convey professionalism and make great first impressions.

Easy To Start

- **No installation required:** - Start using immediately, no installation required.
- **No Training Required:** - A simple interface makes it easy for anyone to pickup and use IncoDocs.
- **Support when you need it:** - Find answers on our Help Center or speak to a team member in-app.

All plans include:

- Customisable Template Library
- Contacts & Products Database
- Document Autofill
- Digital Signatures & Stamps
- Searchable HelpDesk
- QuickBooks & Xero Integrations

 See: [IncoDocs](#) for more information.

Appendix Six – Blockchain Documentation Management Platform

Digital transformation of your supply chain and logistics.

- **Paper is a Hassle.** Paper adds complexity. Paper gets lost. But paper also provides trust. And that trust can be organised differently with blockchain.
- **Paperless is Easy.** Blockchain makes sharing easy. Deleting is impossible. Changes are transparent. Compliance and stakeholder management are a breeze. And it provides you access to the right information anytime, anywhere.

👉 See how [CargoLedger](#) can deliver paperless benefits in managing your supply chain, plus:

- **No Touch Supply Chain:** Digitalization of your logistics. Getting rid of paper. Proof-of-delivery, proof-of-origin and payment-on-delivery. Safer digital handover and increased efficiency. Improved data to drive your supply chain and logistics. Easy, efficient and safe.
- **Increased Efficiency:** increasing your efficiency up to 80% and saving up to €0,70 on every euro spend on order handling and administration due to less validation and verification. Reduce failure costs. Easier compliance.
- **Improved Resilience:** Workflow and control across the supply chain. Actionable knowledge on who does what, where and when. Trigger programmed responses. Control tower. Improved and automated decision making in operations.

Giving you:

- A safe, transparent supply chain, with proof-of-origin, proof-of-delivery and payment-on-delivery.
- Saving you lots of time and money.
- Sharing data with all your supply chain partners on a need to know basis, which results in better information and more insight.
- Which is necessary for easier compliance and improved stakeholder management.

CargoLedger works on the basis of:

- No touch orders with track-and-trace and proof-of-delivery.
- A fully accredited eCMR acknowledged by NIWO*.
- Mobile First and Straightforward Integration.
- An easy fit into your supply chain, transport and logistics operations.

👉 See: eCMR - How to [calculate your savings](#).

👉 *See: [NIWO](#) (The Dutch licensing authority for road transport).

If you are interested in transforming the management of your supply chain ✉ [contact CargoLedger](#).

Appendix Seven – First Report Credit Reports

Before you decide whether to offer trade credit to an international client, you should consider ordering a Credit Report. Credit controllers can then set credit limits that are appropriate for their circumstances.

1. Search for the company.

 See: [Online International Report search page](#).

2. Select from the report choices offered (links to sample reports are offered to help you decide).
3. Pay by credit/debit card or PayPal - or, if you prefer, you can request a pro-forma invoice to make a bank transfer.

First Report offers reports from over 200 countries and employs the best agents available in each country/region/area. The on-line reports are automatically updated the moment new and verified data is available assuring the latest report is always sent to you.

Credit Reports for: Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland (Eire), Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and USA are delivered online. For all other countries, offline reports can be provided within 2-10 days according to the speed requested when placing your order.

International Credit Scores

First Reports' on-line International Credit Reports sometimes have letters in place to determine the given risk. The chart below shows how the risk is scored:

- A Very Good Credit Worthiness (Lowest Risk).
- B Good Credit Worthiness (Low Risk).
- C Satisfactory Credit Worthiness (Moderate Risk).
- D Not Creditworthy.
- E Rating suspended.


Where the risk is shown as a number it is normally scored out of 100 where the lowest risk is the highest number. If the score is not made out of 100 the score would usually be shown as for example 5/10.


International Price Tariffs

These are based on International Credits per Report with a single International Credit costing £9.00 (+VAT)

The minimum cost for an International Report is 5 International Credits.

 See: [Services and Prices](#)

 See: [First Report's FAQs](#) For further details and explanations covering the details behind the Credit Report analyses and Credit Score calculations.

 See: [First Report](#) and chat online (during UK business hours). If you would like to discuss anything with First Report by telephone then you can call FreePhone 0800 716998 or +44 (0)344 414 4014 Monday to Friday.

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