

## Online Distributor Dating: 2020 Rules

How do you sign new distributors without traveling and trade shows? The export community is rushing to virtual trade shows as a new tool. Leading distributors are already past the early novelty of online “blind dates.” What are the new rules of online distributor dating? View Export Solutions’ 10 tips for a successful “match.”

### 1. Are You a Good Fit For Each Other?

The process of exporter and distributor linkage is frequently random, with little thought to pre-screening for prime prospect candidates. Our Export Passport system classifies exporters from level one “start-ups” to level ten multinationals. Distributors range from one star “pioneers” to five star “champions.” Exporters should focus on Prime Prospect distributors that represent a good potential fit based upon their business aspirations and investment level.

### 2. What Distributors Want to Know

Create a one page, fact based company profile focused on “what distributors want to know.” Export managers fill distributor inboxes with offers loaded with information on product attributes, but fail to address key issues regarding brand competitiveness for a country. What is your pricing strategy relative to competition? How much will you invest in promotion and media? What is a reasonable size of the prize for the distributor?

### 3. Brandscaping – Credentials Makeover

Your website is the first place a potential new distributor will check before confirming a web meeting. Has your site been updated to reflect Covid 19 realities? Conduct a credentials makeover of your web site, company catalog, and standard presentation. Focus on commercial facts such as your market share, social media campaigns, and launch model versus bland promises on superior performance and the claim that you export to 30 countries.

### 4. First Date – Casual Coffee

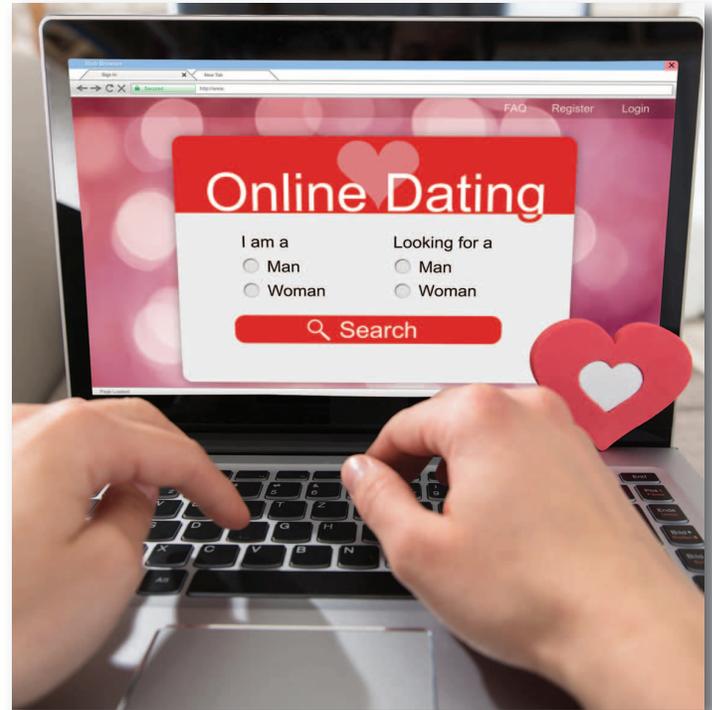
Think of your initial web meeting with a distributor as a first date for a coffee. Do not try to overwhelm the distributor with facts and PowerPoints. Send presentations, samples, and your profile in advance. Devote the “first date” to telling your “brand story” in a personal way. Share relevant local examples while supplying a rationale why the distributor and his country represent a good match with your ambitions.

### 5. Second Date – Working Lunch

What will the relationship look like if the brand and distributor decide to work together? Export manager can share a brief containing their objectives (size of prize), pricing, investment model, and marketing strategy. Motivated distributors will design a business plan and questions. These items should be shared in advance. The second date should be devoted to talking about the proposed plan and gaining alignment around key issues.

### 6. Samples – Essential

A distributor will not buy your product without tasting it. Send samples in advance. Distributors will be compelled to accept the virtual meeting at the very least to share local feedback on taste preference. Include a small gift with your company logo.



### 7. Online Category Reviews – Local Research

Many top supermarket chains feature e-commerce web shops. It’s simple to conduct basic overseas category reviews from the comfort of your home office. This allows you to capture local category dynamics in advance of your call and validate distributor performance at leading retailers. Export Solutions’ retailer database tracks more than 2,500 retailers in 96 countries, with one-click links to retailers web shops as available.

### 8. YouTube Videos Make You Stand Out

Create a fun 2-3 minute YouTube video. Show your factory, product range review, and introduce your export team. Demonstrate your creativity and what an energetic partner you will be. Balance original content with professional quality.

### 9. Check Out Their Family

Reference checks are essential with online distributor dating. Conduct a Google map search to see the distributor’s building. Check out how many employees they have on LinkedIn. See their depth of product listings on local supermarket web shops. Check with two or three of their existing suppliers. Run a Dun and Bradstreet financial check. No company is perfect, but you must provide extra attention to the due diligence process during this period of uncertainty.

### 10. Visit Before the Wedding

Online distributor dating (or Zoomer) can streamline the process of new distributor screening. However, nothing replaces the intimacy of a personal visit to the distributors country. It may be possible to complete the preliminary “dating” steps online. However, it may make sense to delay the wedding ceremony until you can visit the country in person. Divorce is ugly and costly. As with many couples in love today, it may be better idea to delay the wedding to enjoy a longer honeymoon. Good luck!