



MAPS = More Sales

MAPS is the fundamental equation to drive incremental sales. The export manager job description serves as logistics, finance, and customer service manager all rolled up into one person. Our “quality time” with the distributor gets hijacked by routine reports and distractions. Stop! The core responsibility of an export manager is new business development. This includes optimizing sales through your existing distributor network as well as expansion into new countries.



What is MAPS? MAPS is an acronym for **M**erchandising, **A**ssortment (Distribution), **P**ricing, and **S**helf Management, the essential elements for creating in-store visibility and sales. The supermarket (and now cyberspace) is our product showroom. MAPS structures the path for creating an attractive showcase for consumers to buy our brands.

Distribution Listing Maps: #1 Tool

It's impossible to sell when you don't have distribution. A customer specific listing map serves as a valuable helper to measure progress in each country. This one page template highlights major retailers and your authorized assortment by item. This report should be updated monthly and include plans, by customer, to expand distribution.

Pricing: Too High or I Don't Know?

As a shopper evaluates category options, pricing is a critical factor in determining product selection. Many imported brands are priced too high, a significant premium to category norms. In other cases, the manufacturer just sells without consideration of local price points. Exporters should establish a pricing strategy for each country. Track cost centers from factory gate to store shelf and conduct regular price surveys. Would the brand owner make more money with a lower price point, with everyone sacrificing a few margin points in the value chain?

Shelf: Good Store Versus Bad Store?

Many manufacturers fail to provide realistic standards to their distributors on in-store presence expectations. Leaders provide clear guidelines that allow each member of the sales team to define a good store versus a bad store. Export Solutions “Is the Store a 10?” program helps manufacturers structure and launch a shelf improvement initiative.

Merchandising Best Practices

Each brand and retailer maintain best vehicles for stimulating incremental sales. For some, this may represent secondary locations or mass displays. Other manufacturers focus on periodic, deep discount promotions. The key is to establish metrics for merchandising, just as you would shipments. Frequently, if a distributor achieves merchandising KPIs, he will reach his annual shipment budget.

Sales = Sell Out not Buy In

This is the time of the year, when some exporters will suffer from a fourth quarter surprise. Apologetic distributors will report that they have heavy inventory and are unable to meet their annual commitment. Ouch. Monthly tracking of distributor “sell out” and stock by item reduces the risk of this unpleasant news. Deliveries to distributors are just shifting inventory from your warehouse to theirs. Scanner recorded sales reflect a more accurate picture on the state of the business.

Laser focus on MAPS principles is a key factor for export success. This requires us to recalibrate our supplier/distributor relationships to fit within the MAPS framework. How are MAPS metrics guiding your distributor network?

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