



Right Fit?

Is your export development strategy the “right fit” based upon your company’s aspiration and investment? As we assess our international footprint, so much was created in the last century before listing fees, digital marketing, and e-commerce. Many distributor relationships were established long ago, based upon a short meeting at a trade show or a referral from a forgotten colleague. Too many export plans are “copy-paste” from what



Export Solutions
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worked last year! Export success today requires a fresh look at market prioritization and distributor partner profile to insure alignment with your growth objectives.

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1. Segment Countries: Strategic, Priority, or Opportunistic

This guides our choices in terms of marketing budget allocation and time dedicated to managing the country. Incorporate lessons learned on where your brand and category has thrived versus chasing export dreams like China and India where the eating habits are very different. Optimize your business in neighboring countries before collecting pins on the export map from long-haul destinations.

2. “From High Class to Mass”: Retailer Targets

In the USA, everyone wants to sell to Walmart’s 3,650 supercenters. However, this is not the right showcase to pioneer premium overseas brands to adventurous consumers. Each country features upscale retailers featuring broad assortments of international and specialty food brands. E-commerce appears as a universal channel open to new brands. Your strategy should concentrate on winning at the retailers where your target consumers shop.

3. Do Aspirations Mirror Investments?

Too many export plans contain optimistic visions for global expansion. I admire the ambition, but many of these managers are disappointed when the shipment numbers fall short. There is a cost of doing business in every country and it is only going up! Managers should check what it costs to launch and develop a brand in their home country. Adjust for population, and you will quickly discover an activation estimate for an overseas country. Focus on countries where you can market and compete. In some cases, it may be preferred to skip a potential opportunity if you have no budget to support your brand.

4. Are Your Distributors the “Right Fit”?

Everyone knows the famous distributors with impressive capabilities designed for blue-chip multinationals. “Niche” distributors survive through excellent customer relationships, but fewer services. Either model can succeed, as long as your brand development, shipments, and availability sync with market potential. Too often, companies and distributors outgrow each other, but remain in a “bad marriage” due to history. In many cases, companies receive a lift with a long overdue shift to a more modern partner.

5. Enthusiasm and Energy Are Always the Right Size!

Look for local distributor experts with passion, follow up, and commitment. Validate their “PowerPoint promises” with a retail reality check of their current principals.

To win the export race, you must have the right running shoes. If your shoes are too big, you may look good for a while, but not travel far. If your shoes are too small, they will always be a pain. Look for comfortable shoes that match your racing style today. Good luck!

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“Spend Time Selling to Distributors versus Searching for Distributors”

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