

Section 2 Marketing

Introduction

Marketing is a key activity for any business, but is particularly important for a small business that wants to expand globally. In this section we look at the following key topics:

Topic 1: The Marketing Mix

When you have worked through this topic you should be able to:

- explain the seven components of the marketing mix – product, price, promotion, place, people, processes and physical evidence
- describe the difference between primary and secondary market research
- explain the product life cycle
- identify where your products or services are positioned in relation to the product life cycle
- identify any changes you need to make to your own marketing mix.

Topic 2: Marketing Abroad

When you have worked through this topic you should be able to:

- devise a suitable pricing strategy for selling goods and services abroad
- create a well-balanced marketing mix for selling goods and services abroad.

Topic 3: Market Entry Methods

When you have worked through this topic you should be able to:

- explain the difference between indirect and direct exporting
- assess whether or not licensing, joint ventures or off-shore production would be of benefit to your business
- select the most appropriate market entry method for doing business abroad.

Topic 4: Marketing Strategies

When you have worked through this topic you should be able to:

- identify at least one export database which would be suitable and useful for your business
- determine whether or not catalogue exhibitions would be an appropriate marketing tool for your business
- decide whether to create a website, or improve your existing website.

Topic 5: Business Culture and Customs

When you have worked through this topic you should be able to:

- understand the importance of conforming to different international business customs
- recognise some of the key differences between business cultures and customs around the world
- research and use the appropriate customs when doing business abroad.

Glossary of commonly used marketing terms

Agent	Finds firms abroad who are willing to buy your products, usually for a commission on the export price of the goods for which they find buyers.
Channels of distribution	Individuals or businesses which bring your products to the attention of foreign customers – agents, sales representatives, distributors, shops, stores etc.
Customers' perceptions	What customers perceive to be a reasonable price for the product you are selling – taking into account quality, features, choice etc.
Direct exporting	Involves using a sales representative who is based in your chosen country; or selling directly to customers.
Distributor	Purchases goods from you, then sells them abroad at a profit.
Indirect exporting	Involves using an agent or an export management company to find foreign customers for your products (rarely used now).
Licensing	Granting certain rights – by way of a licence – to another business that will enable them to manufacture or sell your goods abroad.
Market entry method	The method used to enter a market. A market could be shops in Holland, factories in Asia, or direct mail order throughout Europe.
Marketing mix	Product, price, promotion, place, people, processes, physical evidence.
Off-shore production	Involves manufacturing your goods in a country of your choice.
Place	The location where the goods are offered for sale (shop, supermarket, mail order etc.) and the way they are distributed and delivered.
Price	The price charged for the product.
Pricing strategy	The strategy used to set prices for products, taking into account (1) costs; (2) competitors' prices and customers' perceptions; (3) channel of distribution; (4) exchange rates, tax or duty, margin.
Primary research	The process of gathering new information from potential and existing customers – through face-to-face interviews, questionnaires etc.
Product	The product or service that is being offered for sale.
Product life cycle	The product life cycle consists of four different stages: (1) birth; (2) growth; (3) maturity; (4) decline.
Promotion	The way in which a product is brought to the attention of potential customers – advertising, discounts, competitions, special offers, etc.
Secondary research	The process of looking at previously published information – government statistics, company reports etc.



Section 2 Marketing

Topic 1 The Marketing Mix

Marketing is a core function within any business – whether a small or medium-sized enterprise, or a massive multinational corporation – and is not just about advertising and selling products or services.

Marketing can best be described as the art of:

- finding out what potential customers want
- creating products and services that satisfy those wants
- selling the products and services at the right price
- making the products and services available in the right places.

The Chartered Institute of Marketing defines marketing as:
 'The management process which identifies, anticipates and supplies customer requirements efficiently and profitably.'

The Seven Ps

Successful marketing depends on getting the right marketing mix – 'the 7 Ps':

- 1 Product** – the products (or services) must be what customers want to buy
- 2 Price** – customers must perceive the price as reasonable for the quality on offer
- 3 Promotion** – customers need to know what is available
- 4 Place** – customers can get hold of the products easily
- 5 People** – staff respond to customers' needs
- 6 Processes** – business processes make it easy for customers to choose and buy the company's products
- 7 Physical evidence** – everything the customer sees – vehicles, shop fronts, brochures etc. – reflects the image the business wants to project.

1 The Product

The product can be:

- tangible goods, e.g. a bar of chocolate, a washing machine, a software programme
- an intangible service, e.g. a computer repair service, an interior design service, a database collation service.

Irrespective of whether you are selling tangible goods or intangible services, if your product itself is not good enough, then no amount of promotion or rock-bottom pricing will persuade customers to buy.

2 The Price

The price should be:

- perceived by potential customers as appropriate. This may not be the cheapest price but one that reflects value for money
- competitive. When customers compare your goods or services to those of your competitors, they should perceive your prices as appropriate and within the price range they would expect to pay.

3 The Promotion

Promotion is the term used to describe the way in which a product or service is brought to the attention of potential customers. Examples include:

- advertising – newspaper, journal, magazine, radio, television, billboards
- competitions – e.g. create a winning slogan and win a holiday for two
- special offers – e.g. buy one get one free; buy now pay next year; 0% interest; money-off tokens.

4 The Place

This is used to describe:

- the place where the goods or services are offered for sale, such as shops, supermarkets, mail order catalogues, the internet
- the way in which the goods or services are distributed and delivered to the customer.

5 People

This concerns your employees – how they interact and relate to your customers, and covers:

- employee training, motivation and team work
- customers – how they are informed of your products and services
- communications – how you convey your company's culture, values and beliefs.

6 Processes

Processes are concerned with ensuring customers can buy your goods and services as easily as possible. Examples of processes are:

- the flow of activities, degree of standardisation or customisation
- simple, accessible and reliable systems and procedures
- levels of customer involvement.

7 Physical evidence

Physical evidence is concerned with those aspects of your business that customers can touch, hear, smell and see, for example:

- the décor, cleanliness and tidiness of your premises
- the appearance of your staff
- your business vehicles – cleanliness, state of repair etc.
- the design of your stationery, brochures, leaflets, websites etc.

An effective marketing mix is one in which each of the 7 Ps is given careful and due consideration.

Product Life Cycle

Every product or service can be said to have a life cycle. The four stages of the product life cycle are:

Birth – the product or service is launched and introduced to prospective customers.

Growth – the product or service becomes popular and begins to sell well.

Maturity – the product or service is selling really well. At this point demand may outstrip supply.

Decline – demand for the product or service begins to decline. There is a reduction in sales, customers start to lose interest in the product or service, and turn their attention elsewhere. Eventually, the product or service is perceived as old-fashioned or somehow inferior and is ultimately phased-out of production.

Market Research

To find out what customers want most companies carry out market research.

Primary research is the gathering of new information from existing customers and potential customers and can be done by:

- talking to customers – via face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, or written questionnaires
- organising focus groups – getting customers to meet to discuss and evaluate current and proposed goods or services.

Secondary research involves looking at information that has previously been gathered, such as government and other statistics, published reports, competitor literature and so on.

Primary research is generally more expensive but more accurate than secondary research.

Check Point

Use this check point to help you:

- think about the products or services you intend to market abroad
- consider each of the seven key elements of the marketing mix.

You may want to work through this check point on your own, or you may find it useful as the basis for a team meeting. Consider each of the following questions and, where appropriate, either tick a circle or note down your responses.

The Product

List the products you are thinking about marketing overseas (they may be tangible or intangible). For each one identify its place in the product life cycle.

1 birth growth maturity decline

2 birth growth maturity decline

3 birth growth maturity decline

If you need to, continue this list on a separate piece of paper.

Are any of the products at the decline stage of their life cycle?

No Yes

If you answered Yes to the last question, do you still intend to try to market the product overseas?

No Yes, because:

How do your products compare with similar products sold by your competitors?

Our products are better than our competitors' products.

Compare reasonably well.

Do not compare very well.

Don't know.

If you do not know how your products compare to your competitors' products, how can you find out what customers think?

If you believe your products do not compare well with your competitors' products, what improvements do you need to make?

The Price

How will your prices compare with those of your competitors?

Our prices are competitive.

Our prices are much cheaper.

Our prices are much more expensive.

Don't know.

Does the price you charge represent value for money?

- Yes.
- Not really, but we can't afford to sell it for less.

Are there any pricing changes you need to make before you market your product overseas?

The Promotion

Have you considered what is culturally acceptable to your chosen market and target audience when promoting your product?

- Yes, we have researched this.
- No, we have not considered this yet.

If not, what research do you need to do to make sure that you promote your product acceptably to overseas customers?

The Place

We intend to market our goods and services through:

- export trading companies which will export for us
- foreign sales agents
- foreign sales distributors
- directly to foreign customers using our own salespeople
- directly to foreign customers through a joint venture with a foreign company
- by mail order
- via our website
- other means.

The People

How well does your business communicate with customers?

- We make a real effort to communicate effectively.
- We do our best but sometimes misunderstandings arise.
- We need to improve our communication both within the business and with customers.

The Processes

How well do your systems and procedures work?

- Everything works very smoothly; customers find us easy to deal with.
- We would benefit from taking another look at our processes.
- We need to begin to consider how our processes affect customers.

The Physical Evidence

What impression does your business present?

- A sharp, professional and competent image.
- Some aspects could do with updating and renewal.
- We do not always promote an appropriate impression and changes need to be made.

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Topic 2 Marketing Abroad

Key elements of the marketing mix may have to be fine-tuned to suit foreign customers.

Getting the Product Right

Every country has its own culture, its own preferences and its own way of doing things. UK businesses need to be aware of this, and need to understand that products that sell well *here* may not sell as well in other countries. Sara Lee, for example, found that their cheesecake and lemon meringue pie products (which sell well in the UK) *do not* sell well in Germany, but *do* sell well in France. McDonalds, whilst making sure that their burgers are uniform and consistent throughout the world, have found it necessary to produce one blend of coffee for their UK customers, and a totally different blend for customers in France. Geeta's Pickles are manufactured in India, exported to the UK and packed in London, and although marketed as 'an authentic Indian recipe', these products have almost certainly been adjusted to suit a European palate.

As well as cultural considerations, technical and legal barriers need to be considered. Products sold in the USA may require approval from national bodies such as the FCC or FDA, despite already having equivalent EU approvals. EU harmonisation is reducing internal product barriers of this kind, but is not yet complete. For example, until recently motorcycle crash helmets sold in the UK required an additional, national approval in addition to EU certification. These are just a few examples of the ways in which manufacturers and exporters must fine-tune their products to ensure they meet the needs of their customers.

Getting the Price Right

If you are planning to export abroad you will need to give careful consideration to your pricing strategy and should take the following factors into account.

Costs – you must ensure all your costs are covered so that you still are able to make a profit.

Competition and Customer perceptions – you will need to check out what your foreign competitors are charging for similar goods, and how much foreign customers are prepared to pay for the kinds of goods you plan to export. Even if your goods are superior in terms of quality or added value, you need to be sure that potential customers in other countries are prepared to pay a higher price.

Channels of Distribution – your selling price must be able to accommodate the kind of mark-ups or margins your distributors (foreign agents, foreign department stores etc.), are likely to add on to your selling price. For example, if you are selling a product at, say, £5, and the distributor is going to add on 100% mark-up and sell the product for £10, you need to know whether potential customers will buy at this price.

Exchange Rates – when setting your prices, make sure you factor in some margin of profit which will cover any fluctuations in foreign exchange rates.

Checklist for creating a pricing strategy

- 1 Calculate all of the costs involved in production.
- 2 Research customer perceptions – what do foreign customers consider to be a reasonable price for your goods?
- 3 Research the competition – what are your competitors charging? How do their products or services compare to your products or services in terms of quality etc.
- 4 Check out what the mark-up on your products or services is going to be, as this will allow you to identify a true selling price.
- 5 Build in an appropriate profit margin to allow for fluctuations in the exchange rate.

Getting the Promotion Right

If you are planning to export to Western Europe, the USA or any other developed country, then your promotion strategy can be similar to what you would use here in the UK. If, however, you intend to export to Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe or any other developing area, there are some key factors to take into account:

- few people have television, but most listen to the radio
- there are levels of illiteracy, so magazine and newspaper advertising may not reach your target customers
- cinema and sports events are often affordable and well attended
- mail and telephone services are often unreliable, and few people have a home phone.

The Institute of Export has a helpful facility on its website for businesses wanting to find out about business opportunities abroad.

Go to www.international-trade.org.uk/zones/market/index.htm, click on markets and key in the name of the country in which you are interested. You will be presented with a detailed and extremely useful country-specific report.

To chop a tree quickly spend twice the time sharpening your axe.
Chinese Proverb

This check point will help you think about whether your current product, pricing and promotion strategies should be adjusted to suit potential customers overseas.

Getting the Product right

To what extent does your product (or service) meet the needs of foreign customers?

- It is perfectly well suited to foreign customers and no changes are needed.
- Some changes may be needed depending on research results.
- Not sure – research will be needed to find out.

Getting the Price right

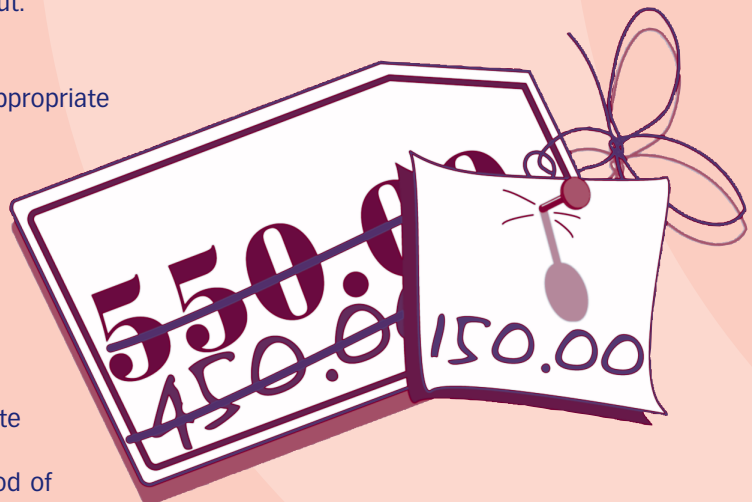
Are you satisfied you have worked out an appropriate price for your product?

- Yes, I've included all costs and come up with an appropriate price.
- I'm still working on this and waiting for additional information.
- I'm not sure and need to think seriously about pricing.

Getting the Promotion right

How successfully do you think you will promote your products and services abroad?

- I am reasonably confident that our method of promotion will produce the results we want.
- I'm in the process of developing an appropriate promotion strategy.
- I need to look at how other organisations promote their products to the countries I'm interested in.



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Topic 3 Market Entry Methods

Reaching your foreign customers

The main ways of entering a foreign market are:

- indirect exporting
- direct exporting
- joint venture
- licensing
- off-shore production.

Direct Exporting

Direct exporting involves doing-everything-yourself, but you do retain control over where the product is placed, its pricing and so on. You may want to consider:

- **employing a sales representative in the country of choice** – Either a UK employee who goes to work abroad on your behalf, or a national of your country of choice (who may work for several exporters). A foreign sales representative will use your brochures, catalogues and samples, work on a commission basis, and accept no business risk (for example, if war breaks out in your chosen country and affects your business, you bear the responsibility, not the representative). If you do employ a foreign national, remember that they will:
 - 1 need a contract of employment which states their territory; remuneration and how this will be paid, and reasons for termination of the contract
 - 2 speak the language, understand local culture and customs and have a wide network of contacts.
- **working with a distributor** – Distributors purchase goods from you and then sell them abroad at a profit. They will hold an inventory of your goods and will usually provide customer service and support.
- **selling directly to end users**
You can find end users at trade shows or through government sponsored foreign-trade programmes.

Indirect Exporting

Indirect exporting – using an agent or an export management company – is a good way for a small business to break into foreign markets, but is now less commonly used, except possibly in African or Middle Eastern markets. Using indirect exporting means you will not be directly involved in the exporting process and so may be able to avoid some of the problems and complexities of international trading. However, two problems with this approach are:

- you are relying on a third party to represent you and therefore may lose some element of control
- the individual or company representing you may not always give the same care and attention to your business as you might.

Agents

Agents find firms abroad who buy your products, usually for a commission on the export price.

Export management companies (also referred to as export trading companies)

Export management companies tend to have a wide network of foreign contacts, which means they can usually find a market for most kinds of goods. EMCs will purchase from you at a discounted price, but they will pay any marketing and transportation costs incurred. In addition to buying your products and selling them abroad, EMCs often provide a wide range of additional services including warehousing, packing and preparing goods for transportation, freight forwarding, customs clearance, documentation, insurance, currency exchange, financing and more.

Check Point

Before you decide whether to use direct or indirect exporting methods, use this check point to help you identify the plus and minus points in relation to your country (or countries) of choice. You may find it helpful to photocopy the blank chart, and then use one chart for each country you are considering exporting to.

Tick just one

Barriers to trade – quotas, tariffs etc	<input type="radio"/> numerous	<input type="radio"/> reasonable	<input type="radio"/> very few
Rules and regulations	<input type="radio"/> numerous	<input type="radio"/> reasonable	<input type="radio"/> very few
Similarities to UK market	<input type="radio"/> very similar	<input type="radio"/> not very similar	<input type="radio"/> very different
Availability and quality of similar products	<input type="radio"/> a lot of similar products, most of which offer same quality as mine	<input type="radio"/> some similar products, but of less good quality	<input type="radio"/> very few similar products
Availability of local representative	<input type="radio"/> good local representative/easily found representative	<input type="radio"/> may be possible to find someone to represent my business	<input type="radio"/> anticipate problems finding a suitable local representative

From your completed checkpoint, decide which form of export would best suit your company and your chosen market

Licensing

It is possible, depending on the goods you produce, to contractually assign the rights to design, intellectual property or technical know-how, either for a one-off payment or ongoing royalty payments. Licensing can take you into foreign markets quickly and with a minimum of cost and fuss, but the downside is that, unless the contract is very carefully drawn-up, you can run the risk of losing control (and technical knowledge) to the licensee.

Joint Ventures

You can negotiate a deal with a foreign company whereby a partnership is formed and agreements are reached with regard to the key aspects of investment, profit and responsibility. Needless to say, great care should be taken with the choice of foreign company, and all legal aspects of the venture and contractual arrangements should be carefully examined by your legal representative before any documents are signed.

Off-shore Production

Off-shore production is probably not an option for most small or medium enterprises but can suit larger businesses. This method of market entry involves establishing a manufacturing plant in the country of choice. By doing this the business can reduce transport costs, avoid tariffs and other protectionist measures and perhaps minimise labour costs.

There are numerous export agents and export management companies. To get a flavour of the kinds of services they offer visit:

www.5five.tv/

www.directory.google.com/Top/Business/Industries/Import_and_Export/Agents

Perhaps most useful of all, talk to other small businesses which use agents and management companies.

If you
can dream it
you can do it.
**Walt
Disney**

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Topic 4 Marketing Strategies

For most small businesses the costs involved in foreign marketing campaigns can be daunting. However, there are some relatively inexpensive marketing strategies which may be of real use to your business.

Exporters' Databases

A good way to market your business is to make sure that you take advantage of the exporters' databases which are available to businesses in the UK. Such databases enable foreign customers to find out what kinds of goods and services are available for export from the UK. In most cases, you can add your business details to these databases free of charge and all you need to invest is ten or twenty minutes of your time to provide the required information. Details of your business are then stored on the database and can be accessed by potential customers from around the world.

Trade Partners UK is the UK government website which provides a large database (over 60,000 firms) of UK companies which currently export abroad, or which would like to export abroad. You can add your company's details free of charge, and also have a free link to your own website, if you have one. Trade Partners UK also provides lists of Trade Events. To find out more, go to www.tradepartners.gov.uk BizEurope is another website which specialises in providing information on importing and exporting opportunities to companies around the world, and they can be found at www.bizeurope.com ECEurope provides a free service to both buyers and sellers and offers to help your business generate more sales leads and locate suppliers of products or services. You can find them at www.eceurope.com As a British exporter you can add a basic entry, free of charge, to the British Exporters Database which you will find at the Institute of Export's website at www.export.co.uk

Catalogue Exhibitions

Catalogue Exhibitions are another good way to market your products and services cost effectively to potential foreign customers. Catalogue Exhibitions are hosted by the British Embassy in the foreign country where customers are being sought. For example, in 2001, British Embassies in Saudi Arabia, Lithuania, Pakistan, South Africa, Estonia, Turkey and China all hosted Catalogue Exhibitions.

This is how Catalogue Exhibitions work:

- The British Embassy in the country concerned, along with local Chambers of Commerce, invites buyers and distributors to attend an Exhibition.
- The Exhibition is manned by Embassy staff, and people from the UK government-sponsored Trade Partners UK, UK Institute of Export and UK Business Links.
- You submit sample catalogues (leaflets, brochures etc) which provide information about the products and services you want to export.
- Visitors to the Exhibition can examine your marketing material and request copies.
- You are given the name and address of every individual and business that asked for a copy of your catalogue – which means that you can personally follow up every lead.

Catalogue Exhibitions are arranged by the British Embassies as a free service to UK-based businesses. For more information, go to www.supercatex.co.uk

**Marketing is not
a function – it is the
whole business seen
from the customer's
point of view.
Peter Drucker**

Check Point

Use this check point to help you think about your current marketing materials and whether or not they need to be updated or improved.

Our marketing material and business stationery is modern, up-to-date and represents the business well.

- Yes, I'm proud of our brochures and other written marketing material.
- Not really, they could do with updating and improving.
- No – we need to re-think and re-design our brochures, catalogues, stationery etc.

Our business website is attractive and informative.

- Yes, our website works well.
- Not really – there's a lot of room for improvement.
- We don't have a website yet.

Our website, marketing materials and stationery address overseas market considerations.

- Yes, we have addressed considerations of language, cultural acceptability and pricing for the overseas markets in our website and marketing materials.
- We have begun to think about these issues, but have not yet incorporated them into our website or marketing materials.
- We have not taken the overseas market into consideration.

Use this space to note down your ideas for improving your written marketing materials.

Creating your own Website

These days, businesses which are keen to attract foreign customers will have their own website. If you are not particularly interested in computer technology, the idea of setting up and running a business website may seem daunting. In fact, anyone with basic computer skills can create and publish a reasonable website in a matter of hours, and you might want to consider (1) doing it yourself; (2) asking someone in the organisation or family (who has the know-how) to do it for you; (3) employing a company.

Designing a website

You can create a dynamic and attractive website using a number of software programmes such as:

- Microsoft Word (word processing package)
- Microsoft Publisher (desktop publishing package)
- Web Wizard (website creation programme available at www.web-wiz.com)

Employing a website design company

Clearly, this is a more expensive option but one that may suit you best. Look in your local *Yellow Pages* telephone directory under *Internet* and you will find listings of companies in your local area that design, publish and update websites. Before deciding which company to use:

- obtain estimates from at least three different companies
- ask to see samples of websites they have produced
- talk to at least two existing customers to see if they are satisfied with the service
- talk to other small businesses and find out which company or individual they used to create their website.

Your website should, at the very least, provide the following information:

- company name, address, telephone, fax, e-mail address plus a contact name
- details of the products and services you offer
- details of any catalogues, brochures, leaflets etc. that potential customers can request
- the reasons why a potential customer should buy from you, rather than from a competitor.

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Topic 5 Business Culture and Customs

Perhaps the most powerful marketing tool your business has available to it, is you – or your designated representative. When dealing with prospective customers, everything you say and do is important. If customers like you, trust you, and believe you to be a champion of quality goods and services, they will be more likely to buy from you; if they perceive you in a bad light, they may not.

As a small business operating in the UK you are already familiar with what is and is not acceptable business behaviour. It is just as important to understand the business culture and customs of the country with which you hope to deal, or unexpected problems may occur.

Here are some points to bear in mind when doing business with customers abroad. For more detailed information on business customs and culture around the world, go to www.executiveplanet.com.

Doing business with US customers

- Business cards are usually not exchanged unless someone wants you to contact them afterwards.
- Business is usually conducted at a very fast pace and Americans are very conscious of the 'time is money' concept. They will prefer it if you get to the point quickly!
- American customers can be very focused on deadlines and results and will expect you to work hard to produce what has been agreed – and no excuses!
- American customers are quite happy to say 'no', if that is how they feel.

Doing business with Hong Kong customers

- Business cards are a key aspect of business life in Hong Kong. Your business card should be in English on one side and Chinese on the other, and should include your name, title, address and telephone and fax numbers and your company's logo. If someone offers you their business card, always offer your card in return. Failure to do this will be seen as a rebuff, or implying that you lack the status to have a business card. Always read the card, then place it carefully in your card case, or on the table if you are seated. Never push it into a back pocket or treat it with disrespect.
- Be modest and patient in all your dealings and never show irritation or bad temper.
- It is unlikely you will hear a direct 'no' from a potential customer in Hong Kong – you are much more likely to hear 'maybe', or 'I'll think about it', or 'perhaps'.
- Age and authority are respected. An older representative is likely to gain greater respect and credence.

Doing business with Chinese customers

- Business cards are important in China and one side should be in English, and the other in the appropriate Chinese dialect. Gold is an excellent colour to use on a business card as, in Chinese culture, gold represents prestige and prosperity. Offer your card with both hands, Chinese side facing up towards the recipient. When handed a card always read it, and then place it carefully in your card case, or on the table if you are seated. Never push it into a back pocket or treat it with disrespect.
- Chinese customers pay great attention to authority and hierarchy and ensure that their people enter a meeting room in order of importance. If you are with colleagues, bear in mind that the first person to enter the room will be perceived as the most important person in your party.
- Only the most senior people present will take part in discussions and negotiations, and junior colleagues are expected to be seen but not heard.
- Never cause your customer loss of face or embarrassment, as this will certainly lose you the deal.



Doing business with Japanese customers

- Business cards are very important in Japan. Yours should be in English on one side and Japanese on the other, and should include your qualifications and membership of professional associations. Cards are presented after a bow or a handshake, and don't be surprised if a subordinate presents a card to you on behalf of his boss. Examine the card carefully and, if possible, make a positive comment about it. Place it carefully in your card case, or on the table if you are seated. Never push it into a back pocket, treat it with disrespect or write on it.
- Avoid jokes; at all times seek to present a calm, amiable exterior.
- Long periods of silence are to be expected and do not indicate disapproval or unease.
- Oral agreements can be indicated by way of a nod or bow, rather than a handshake.

Doing business with Saudi Arabian customers

- Eye contact is very important. Remove your sunglasses and look people in the eye when talking.
- Western women are not required to wear veils but must, at all times, dress modestly and appropriately.
- Saudi customers will expect you to be lively, sincere, honest and respectful in your dealings with them, and if you are too quiet and restrained they may think there is a problem.

Doing business with German customers

- Business cards need only be in English. They will be exchanged and treated much as in the UK.
- You must be well-prepared for meetings, and extremely well-informed about your products.
- Brochures and other written marketing material should be straightforward, detailed and honest.
- Remain professional and avoid humour and jokes during business negotiations.

Doing business with Israeli customers

- English is the language most commonly used in business.
- Your engraved business card should be printed in English, as should written marketing material.
- Orthodox Jewish men – usually identified by their skull caps or clothing – are forbidden to touch any woman other than a close family member. Women doing business in Israel need to bear this in mind so, for example, business cards should be placed on the table within reach of the prospective customer, but not directly into his hand.
- Women seeking to do business in Israel should dress very conservatively and modestly.
- Serving coffee usually signals the end of the meeting. Israeli Arabs may then also light incense.

Doing business with Belgian customers

- In Belgium, although many people speak English, there are two main languages – French and Flemish.
- Business cards should be in English on one side and, on the other, the language of the region.
- Do not speak French in a Flemish-speaking region – most people will speak English anyway.

Doing business with Russian customers

- Your business card should be printed in English on one side and Russian (with Cyrillic text) on the other.
- Your written marketing material and all business correspondence should be prepared in Russian.
- Keep presentations simple. Don't expect many resources, e.g. flipcharts, overhead projectors etc.
- Contracts should be clear and straightforward and written in both English and Russian.

Doing business with French customers

- Your business card should be printed on one side only, and in English.
- Try to speak some French, even if it is really basic, as your prospective customers will appreciate it.
- Avoid personal conversations. Stay polite, cool and business like until better acquainted.
- Avoid a hard-sell approach.

Doing business with Indian customers

- Your business card should be printed on one side only, in English, and should always be presented.
- Refreshments may be offered during meetings, and to refuse a drink is considered to be an insult.
- Many businesses are family-run concerns and often a decision to buy will be taken by the family.

One ounce of learning requires ten pounds of common sense to apply it.
Persian Proverb