

Exporting requires us to see things differently

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Abstract

In these challenging economic times many governments have taken to exhorting companies to export goods and services as a means of job creation or addressing the trade deficit. In the light of such a stance a plethora of agencies (both public and private) have been established with a view to endeavouring to wave the flag overseas. Whilst becoming an exporter is a perfectly laudable objective, it needs to be understood that such a course of action requires us to see things differently. Currently, whilst there are some notable examples of success, the prevailing mindset in regards to exports is often risk adverse or coloured by a knowledge deficit that inevitably results in a form of myopia. Many in leadership roles in both the public and private sphere already demonstrate a lack of foresight and thus it should come of little surprise that atychiphobia often appears to undermine attempts to venture forth and win new customers and markets. Many a board falls back on the old idiom; "better the devil you know, than the devil you don't". The world over considerable comfort and reassurance is to be found in the familiar. A natural conservatism and fear of the unknown results in caution, a fact that simply cannot be ignored. For all this, opportunities aplenty exist and with a degree of courage there should be no reason why enterprises of differing sizes should not enter the export arena. Potential exporters need to do their homework, engage in due diligence, appreciate that every market is different, as well as taking cognizance of taxation laws, legal safeguards, regulatory requirements etc. Compared with previous generations we enjoy unparalleled levels of connectivity and by optimising such connectivism we are better placed to forge meaningful relationships that may well prove mutually beneficial.

When it comes to seeing things differently we would do well to from viewing things from an Antipodean perspective. If we liberate ourselves from the cartographical orthodoxy we start to appreciate that as things stand we are only appreciating part of the picture. What might apply to the likes of Australia or New Zealand could well be applied to other parts of the globe. The current dynamic is such that periodically we need to realign and recalibrate our thinking in order to challenge existing knowledge and understanding. Australian exporters whilst realising that that there is still considerable business to be done with the Anglosphere have learnt to adapt to a world which is less Eurocentric. Fresh connections have been forged and new orders won. If proof were needed of some of the surprising developments that have taken place in recent decades, one need not look further than the fact that since 2002 Australia has been exporting camels to Saudi Arabia. It might come as something of a revelation to some to discover that a distillery on the Australian island of Tasmania was recently awarded the distinction of producing the world's best single malt whisky, an accolade that has resulted in a dramatic rise in exports. Such examples not only challenge our existing understanding, but should serve as a reminder of the importance of being open to new opportunities and learning. By becoming autodidacts we empower ourselves and become better prepared for the heuristic learning that is integral to the challenge of being an effective exporter. International trade at whatever level is not for the faint hearted, but does require a degree of perception and courage that not every individual or organisation possesses. Seeing things differently is not only relevant to the field of exports, but to other areas of human endeavour. We would all do well to factor such an approach into our thinking.
