

## SPEECH AT SBSS INTERNATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS SUMMIT 22-09-2023

### Deakin University – Downtown



Good Morning – It's great to be part of the distinguished speakers and guests today.. representing Government, Academia and Business.

Can I start with a holistic context .. Last Saturday I co-hosted the United Nations International Day of Peace where the theme this year is "Actions For Peace".. It's about how we can work individually and collectively as humanity to foster peace on our planet.

Yesterday I got a feel for the candid presentations, recommendations and improvements we would like to see for small businesses and for the small business eco-system in general. I quickly realised that I had to change my presentation for today so it doesn't sound like Export 101.

Today I want to be really really honest... But I don't want to embarrass or humble anybody!! It is just a question!... It is just a question!

Based on my nearly 30 years of trade and international diplomatic relations, I want to say this.. "It never ceases to amaze me the number of times when I meet Australian trade or diplomatic representatives abroad How ill-prepared they are for the job on hand.. They are culturally, linguistically, spiritually and politically clueless.. Seriously?? What are you doing here? Are you supposed to be representing me??"

I would like to see Austrade/DFAT invest more time, energy and resources in creating and developing specialised trade commissioners and diplomatic representatives that suits the country they are working in. They need to be linguistically, culturally, spiritually & politically competent and specialise in that country/region long term. You can not afford to be too complacent and Australia needs to lead on that front.. Running world affairs is a sophisticated endeavour...

At the end of the day it's these government representatives who should be creating the favourable trading environment for you and me to engage in with greater level of success and confidence.

Trade agendas are dictated by governments and big businesses on a mega scale and a lot of the finer details in international trade/business are lost or ignored.. which is accentuating our differences as nations. This is simply wrong in the long term.

Small Businesses are encouraged to do their home work on target export markets with regards to cultural and linguistic challenges that exit for marketing and sales strategies. Yet we see these important fundamentals ignored at government and big businesses levels which is hypocritical and sad.

Yes small businesses are generally required to do their home work on target export markets with regards to cultural and linguistic sensitivities for marketing and sales. My advice here is that if you are thinking about exporting, start small and build up your export muscles just like you would by going to the gym.

Take advantage of proximity (distance) and homogeneous markets to reduce the challenges of culture/language to test your product and expand slowly. Eg, You may want to start testing your product in New Zealand and expand gradually to say Asia and Middle East.

Think about your ideal client/customer in terms of demographics.

Give your product/service lots of thought about what makes it unique to your client/customer.. How does it solve their problems and create value for them.

How does it stand out from the competition and is it price competitive?

Consider the channels you want to market and sell your product/service. Market place V E-Commerce (Amazon, Ali Baba, Ebay), Social Media, customised website, Direct Exporting, Agents & Distributors, Licencing & Joint ventures..

Take your export marketing and sales strategies seriously and stay laser focused and stay the course. You can't afford to dabble with export here and there because it will waste your time, money and energy. Getting it right means the reward will be immense..

Thank you and that's all from me today...