



There are nine people in my company. Who's got the time for exporting?

Nathaniel Ward, CGBP, Trade Advisor and Center Director

I would like to introduce you to Kevin. Kevin is a senior undergraduate international business major at a large university in my state. I got to know Kevin through a unique program developed in Ohio called the Export Internship Program. At the time, I was working for a company where we had very few people in our office, and even fewer who could dedicate themselves to doing the "grunt work" that exporting requires.



Dennis Lynch, longtime Food Export helpline counselor, is fond of telling companies "If you want to really grow your export business hire someone who likes to read!" His point being that too often the international business is handled by a high ranking person like the company president. This is understandable seeing the upfront investment involved in recruiting foreign buyers. Inevitably, however, the administrative work required by export transactions will overwhelm those individuals whose main task is usually to run the whole company.

Among the top reasons companies have told me they don't export more is always resources. Often there isn't anyone the company can afford to dedicate to slugging through export-related transactions. Let me give you just one example to highlight what I mean. A while ago, I was involved in a situation where a company I was working for was trying to register 24 products in Costa Rica. Each SKU required six distinct documents for registration. That's 144 documents for just one country. Sales could not begin until that paperwork was completed. And there was a lot of pressure to get it done. This was something that was going to take weeks, if not months, to complete.

Enter Kevin and the Export Internship Program. Kevin, and all the rest of his 47 counterparts, were placed via a matchmaking service by Ohio Development Service Agency. The students work for 12 weeks at 40hrs/week in various companies around the state. He spent each day that summer at my side. We paid him a good intern wage. The state reimbursed the company for half this wage. In return Kevin not only helped us complete the CR registration paperwork, but likewise paperwork in Brazil, attended a trade show, completed a market prioritization study

and helped us participate in a foreign buyers' mission (photo above) and much more. In short, Kevin's work saved the day. This program has become a highlight in my state where:

1. Small businesses get an up-close chance to work with top-line upcoming labor talent.
2. Students get meaningful work experience and;
3. Companies get support in a critical and difficult to develop area in exporting. The results have been incredible. Students are getting jobs in companies where they get to create their own job's justification. Small companies get first dibs at great talent.

The window is coming up soon. Fifty five EIP students - who come from a dozen Ohio universities and colleges - begin their semester-long formation in January. Ohio companies can apply as of January 1, 2016 to host an EIP student for the summer (May-August). Contact the Ohio Department of Development Services for more information:

http://development.ohio.gov/bs/bs_oxip.htm

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