

# Opportunity knocks for trade finance business

Stephen Lyle Smythe explains how the advice and services provided by Trade Partners UK has helped UK exporters to reach a far wider audience.

**T**rade Partners UK is the Government's lead organisation providing trade support services for UK companies trading overseas. It exists to give UK companies the advice and support they need to grow their export business and compete more successfully on the world stage.

Within its parent organisation British Trade International, Trade Partners UK works alongside Invest UK (formerly the Invest in Britain Bureau), which focuses specifically on the needs of potential UK investors. Bringing government services for international trade and investment together is part of the process of adapting to changing markets.

The main role of Trade Partners UK is to seek out and help UK exporters which want to develop new opportunities in overseas markets. Its vast international service network enables it to provide sales leads, market information, consultancy services and contacts.

## Services delivered online

Trade Partners UK services are increasingly becoming available online via its website, [www.tradepartners.gov.uk](http://www.tradepartners.gov.uk). The site provides information and advice, in an easily accessible format, for exporters and potential exporters. It a good source of information on specific countries and business sectors, contact details, advice for new exporters and offers an opportunity for companies to ask online questions and find out news about upcoming Trade Partners UK events.

Also available online is the body's free export leads service, [www.tradeuk.com](http://www.tradeuk.com). Registering for this service is free and enables users to receive leads, matched to their requirements, mailed directly to their desktops. These leads are provided by a global commercial network. Companies that wish to export can also add their details

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to the Tradeuk.com searchable database of UK suppliers. This makes it simple for buyers worldwide to find out what your firm can do for them.

For companies that are not yet sure whether they are ready to export, the website also provides a self-assessment checklist to help them assess their potential.

## Networks for export success

Trade Partners UK offers a network of service providers throughout worldwide. Within the UK the network brings together nine Whitehall Government departments, the regional development agencies and business links. It also works closely with Chambers of Commerce and trade associations, as well as the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This nationwide network enables the government body to deliver its range of services where it counts – at a local level. By tapping into this network, businesses can get answers to their questions from someone in their region, who is aware of the types of problems they may be facing and is experienced in finding solutions.

Outside the UK, Trade Partners UK can tap into the worldwide resources of commercial specialists in the 200-strong network of British embassies and high commissions. Each of these posts is a valuable source of business intelligence and trade leads.

## Services for exporters

Trade Partners UK provides a portfolio of export promotion and support services to UK businesses of all sizes and in all sectors. These include:

- a special development programme to help new exporters prepare to work in new overseas markets;
- more than 100 local export clubs, bringing new and experienced exporters together. Meeting regularly throughout the year, these export clubs provide a forum for informal discussion on all matters relating to exporting;
- help in getting the language and cultural issues right, to ensure that companies make the most of the opportunities they identify;
- support to exhibit at the world's key trade fairs – and a number of less well known niche exhibitions;
- help to join other UK companies on trade missions to major markets; and
- special explorer first-time visit packages for newer exporters to Europe, the US and Canada.

Trade Partners UK is ready to help companies at all stages in their exporting plans. Its message is clear: take advantage of the opportunities that exist in exporting – there's a whole world out there. ■

*Stephen Lyle Smythe is Director, Strategy and Communications Group, at Trade Partners UK.*

[www.tradepartners.gov.uk](http://www.tradepartners.gov.uk)

## Companies which have benefited from Trade Partners UK Case study one: Tesco

Tesco is one of the UK's best known supermarket retailers. With the company's international expansion, opening new stores in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland, as well as South Korea, Thailand and soon Taiwan, it is set to become a household name around the world. And Trade Partners UK has played a part in its success story.

Besides its international store growth, Tesco has also been making a name for itself overseas since 1986 by exporting its own brand products to countries where the company has no corporate presence.

Brenda Howard in Tesco's Export division in Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, outlines the diversity of goods the company exports: "For the most part we supply ambient foodstuffs – that's tinned, packed or bottled food – which has a long shelf life. But we also export some frozen foods, household cleaning and health and beauty goods, as well as wines and spirits. In all, we carry about 6,000 lines for export."

One of Tesco Exports' main markets is the Middle East, where a number of retailers, often the largest in their respective markets, use Tesco products as their own 'own brand' choice. European resorts, in countries such as Spain, Portugal and Malta, which attract British holidaymakers are another strong market for Tesco Exports.

The company serves customers in some of the most far afield locations in the world. As a key supplier to the NAAFI organisation it ships

to British Forces based in Ascension Island, Kenya and The Falkland Islands. It also a key supplier to the civilian population of the remote South Atlantic island of St Helena.

Tesco Exports works with Trade Partners UK via Business Link Hertfordshire in St Albans. This organisation co-operates closely with the local Chamber of Commerce, a relationship which Howard believes has served the company well. She says: "This is really a case of two plus two making five. Business Link Hertfordshire works in tandem with the Chamber of Commerce to give us the complete export service we need."

The Chamber helps Tesco Exports with the certification and legalisation of export documents. For its part, the Business Link provides Tesco with up-to-date market information and organises trade missions. Howard explains: "Most recently, we have been talking to BTI about a trip to Morocco and Tunisia to help us build our sales to North Africa."

She concludes: "Above all, the Business Link is always there for us as a helpful and supportive source of advice. As such, it has played an important role in our growing export success." ■

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## Case study two: Nopex

UK firm Nopex has pioneered a process that is massively expanding the medical and cosmetic potential of garlic. It is working with Trade Partners UK and its free export leads service Tradeuk.com to sell it to the world.

Garlic has long been recognised a potent aid to healing for humans and animals. Garlic, of course, has another, notorious property: the smell. "The pungent smell associated with garlic can puts some people off, and this has put constraints on its use," explains Peter Josling, a Nopex Director.

Now, however, Nopex has discovered a process to unleash the full medicinal potential of garlic, contained in the substance which gives garlic its distinctive pungency: allicin. This has all the benefits of garlic, but none of the lingering smell. But, as Josling points out, the chemical properties of allicin have up to now prevented its widespread use. "Allicin is highly unstable – once it is extracted it has to be stored at minus 70 degrees Centigrade, otherwise it will lose its potency."

Nopex's patented process allows it to produce for the first time stable liquid and powdered forms of allicin, which the company calls Allimax. This can then be added to soaps, sprays, shampoos and creams or taken orally, and with the smell factor eliminated, the range of uses allicin can be put to knows almost any limits.

Nopex is set upon building up a global business around Allimax within five years. As a first move, the company needed to build up a distributor network for its products. This appeared a daunting task. "Finding the right people to act as our agents in different countries

ourselves would have eaten up all of our time and cost a lot of money. We needed help so we talked to our local Business Link in Kent about how we could get started."

An adviser from the DTI's Regional Supply Network, working alongside Nopex's local Kent Business Link, recommended that the company sign up for Tradeuk.com – the export leads service from Trade Partners UK. Leads sourced around the world are sent direct to registered TradeUK companies' e-mail accounts.

Nopex worked with its Business Link adviser to build its Tradeuk.com profile, specifying the kinds of leads it wanted. Josling continues: "We set fairly broad parameters as we knew Allimax would be of interest to all kinds of chemicals and pharmaceuticals companies."

Once Nopex had registered it did not take long for the leads to begin pouring in. "Tradeuk.com quickly gave us lots of leads – at no cost whatsoever. Best of all, these were warm leads, from companies which were genuinely interested in our product," says Josling. Leads came in from all around the world, including the Czech Republic, Egypt, Mexico, the Middle East, Brazil, South Africa and the US.

Peter Josling concludes: "We are a small company and we have only been in business on a limited liability basis for a year. Thanks to TradeUK we have been able to create a presence around the world and connect with potential agents and customers everywhere. It is a great service for any company that wants to get into exporting." ■

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