



Fogarty – a good night's sleep in any language

From its headquarters and manufacturing base in Boston, Lincolnshire, Fogarty has for over 125 years supplied quilts, pillows, mattress protectors and associated products to customers around the world. The company's success has been based on its drive to 'add value' for its clients, and languages have played a significant part in this process.

With a genuinely global customer base, managers at Fogarty have to be particularly aware of the importance of cultural and language variations. Export Manager Gerry Blacoe comments: "Understanding the subtleties of working in overseas markets is not just important for us; it's critical."

Languages competence is crucial

On one level, this is a matter of being aware of the different norms for bedding materials: small differences in preferences may seem unspectacular, but they can make a difference to success or failure in export markets. Many continental European customers, for example, prefer a taped edge to their quilts; bolsters go down well in France; fabric care coding is vital in the United States; and bed and pillow sizes vary significantly across the world.

But beyond this, language use and ability are crucial in securing and maintaining overseas contracts. "We recognise that to win business, we have to be very mindful of our customers' needs, and language is one of the key elements in achieving this," comments Gerry Blacoe. Fogarty currently has the capability in-house to converse and correspond in French, Spanish and German as well as in English.

Gerry himself speaks French and German, which proved very useful on a recent trade mission to Poland. "As a first step, we had our publicity materials translated into Polish," he explains. "With the help of the British Embassy in Warsaw, we were able to recruit a team of distributors to help us initially establish ourselves in this potentially important market. German was a common tongue with some companies, which we were able to use to discuss and negotiate how to move the business forward."

Quality translation is a key

Translation of packaging, labels, brochures and publicity material into the language of the market is also an important tool to ensure success. But cultural subtleties are crucial too, such as being mindful in the Middle East of not featuring images of women with bare shoulders.



Despite the success it has achieved in export markets, the company is by no means resting on its laurels. With help from Business Link Lincolnshire, it is in the process of looking at developing downloadable images as part of its extensive website which would support overseas distributors and licensees. The provision of content in the requisite languages is one of the major points of discussion for the project team.

Case study

Overseas expansion involves language elements

In addition, it is currently considering an expansion of the number of licensing partners it uses: presently there are two in Central Europe and one in the Middle East. Such overseas partners benefit from the strong Fogarty image and branding, but are able to source supplies locally and develop products specifically targeted towards the local market. "And crucially," adds Gerry Blacoe, "our partners in such markets are able to communicate with consumers in their own language, and with packaging presentation that suits local styles. From our extensive experience, this is without doubt a critical part of delivering bottom-line results."

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| <p>Contacts</p> <p>Fogarty www.fogarty.co.uk</p> | <p>Regional Language Network East Midlands helps East Midlands companies access more international trade opportunities by breaking down language and cultural barriers. The RLN offers a central point of contact for information and support on international communications, and provides valuable commercial information through events, newsletters and briefings.</p> <p>RLN East Midlands, UK Trade and Investment, International Trade Centre, Innovation House, Riverside Park, Raynesway, Derby, DE21 7BF.</p> <p>Tel: 01332 826432 www.rln-eastmidlands.com</p> |
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