

## Celebrating 20 years Success

**Earlier this year, the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) celebrated 20 years of delivering the Export Marketing Research Scheme (EMRS) for UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) by bringing together those key players involved during the 40 years in which the programme has been advising businesses.**

The Scheme encourages British exporters to conduct and use marketing research in the development of a market entry strategy. Over the last 20 years with the BCC, the Scheme has encouraged over 6000 such projects and, with £11m grant money, has steered companies towards sales totalling £300m within their first year of entering that market. This is clearly only the tip of the iceberg as the companies go on to enjoy far more sales in subsequent years.



UKTI Bob Collier meets BCC Director General, David Frost

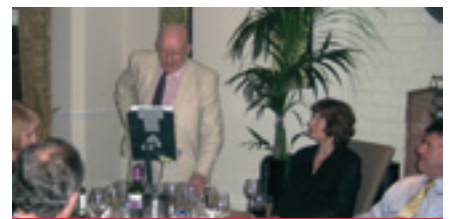
David Frost, Director General of the BCC, acknowledges its undisputed success and significant impact upon companies' export performance, pointing out that there really is no

time like the present for companies to research their potential export markets. David cites the example of Sigmala who learnt during their research that there was a need for a completely new type of machine designed specifically for the American market. They went on to develop this machine and within the year they had taken orders from the USA totalling \$450,000, with addition sales in the order of \$1m plus per machine expected. Lee Fenney, Managing Director, concluded, "I am not sure that we'd have a company today if we had not got involved with the Export Marketing Research Scheme."

Denis Pirie, a Research Adviser on the Scheme during the 1980s, recalls fondly the days when it was run at the DTI offices in London, illustrating how important the commitment was then as it is now to the principles and practices of the market research discipline. "Nevertheless, there were often times when we had to fend off suggestions to dilute the key rules, sometimes by clients who wanted us to fund sales trips and sometimes even by other persons within the department but we always defended

the Scheme's integrity like a tigress defending her cubs." Robin Godfrey, Manager of the Scheme acknowledges how essential the contributions made by the individuals working on the Scheme had been.

The Scheme continues to guide hundreds of exporters year after year towards productive research projects that provide the insight for companies to develop effective and profitable approaches to their overseas markets. In this Newsletter, we expand upon the three important components of



Research Adviser, Denis Pirie speaking on the night

the programme; conformance with the principles of market research; focus on making an impact upon those projects we can influence; and the dedication and commitment of the people involved.

Robin Godfrey, BCC EMRS Manager



# Dedicated commitment of the people involved

While the Export Marketing Research Scheme (EMRS) is a most effective UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) service, Robin Godfrey, Manager of the EMRS says, “It is nothing without the dedication and commitment of the people who deliver it” and goes to great lengths to select carefully those researchers that have the necessary skills and experience to carry out the role of Export Marketing Research Adviser (EMRA).

The principal aim of the EMRS is to encourage exporters to conduct and use marketing research in the development of a strategy for new overseas markets; we have accumulated numerous case studies where this approach has indeed led to a strategy that has resulted in a significant increase in the volume of sales in the researched country. The intervention is provided by five regionally based EMRAs who on a company by company basis impart the relevant advice at the right time, in the right way, to the right person to make a difference to the company’s performance abroad.

Richard Gilbert is one such Adviser who, like all advisers on the Scheme, has worked in international market research commercially for a number of years; after a spell in the UK with major full service market research agency, HI Europe, he went out to



Robin Godfrey, EMRS Manager

Richard believes passionately in the power of market research and speaks about the need for companies to take this step when planning a new overseas venture. Richard jumped at the chance to join the EMRS when the opportunity arose to work with SMEs. “EMRS can make a real difference to the profitability of these SMEs”, he says, “It is satisfying to see so many exporters realising how manageable marketing research can be. Many exporters have the right ideas floating in their head and guiding them through the logical flow of a research plan puts all those ideas in the right order.”

All these experiences add up to a set of skills, knowledge and competence to provide practical advice to exporters on the appropriate use of marketing research.



Richard Gilbert, Adviser

the Far East to manage the delivery of market research services in Bangkok, then onto TNS in China.

Like other advisers Richard has previously worked in exporting spending two years in Thailand setting up a training department for an Australian University.



Research Advisers: Clive Hogan, Anne Williams, Richard Gilbert and Julie Macken

## Market Research Top Tips

We can expect a surge in the number of enquiries generated through your website as more overseas customers look for good deals from the UK market, highlighting the opportunities that might exist in these overseas markets. Using the principles and practices of marketing research to explore the market will limit the risks associated with these opportunities.

### 1) Take control of your export strategy and stay in control

Make export sales a part of your business strategy and include a plan to develop exports over a five year period. Stick with the plan. “Companies that research an export market thoroughly go in with their eyes open, fully aware of the opportunities and potential pitfalls. If you don’t do this, you can keep trying and failing without ever knowing the reasons why”, comments Managing Director Dr. Peter Sheard of Trend 2000, a leading manufacturer of polymer composite products.

### 2) Select markets wisely

Choose the markets yourself - do not have the markets choose you! Agents and distributors that approach your company offering to represent you are acting in their own best interests to expand their businesses not yours!

### 3) Be serious about the market

Plan for a presence in the market not just to find one or two customers. When faced with a potential business development opportunity in Romania, Indigo Brave, a professional development training company, had two choices. It could grasp the opportunity with both hands or could take the time to investigate the opportunity fully. Luckily says Indigo Brave Director, Vanya Green, the company chose the second option because they found a huge interest in training but absolutely no budget to do it; there will be an opportunity for them to go into that marketplace in the future; however, in the short term, no viable market exists for them.

### 4) Know what you don’t know

Undertake marketing research - be very clear about the information you need to find out in order to make the decisions about what you are going to have to do in order to be successful in the new market; adapt the product, set a pricing strategy, choose a route to market and position yourself competitively.

### 5) Do your homework

Leave no stone unturned in your pursuit of knowledge about the market, visit the essential websites listed on BCC’s Surfing without Drowning pages and take advice from the research adviser about who to speak to that knows.

# Challenging times

## BCC opinion

John Dunsmure, Managing Director of the British Chambers of Commerce comments:



John Dunsmure, BCC

“There is so much economic and political uncertainty at the moment. Many companies are very concerned about their future. Whilst we are not celebrating the falling rate of the UK pound there could be some competitive advantages to be gained by companies wishing to export at the moment. However the whole area of exporting exposes business to new risks they should work hard to mitigate. The Export Marketing Research Scheme (EMRS) is the perfect place to start for any company that seriously wants to explore an opportunity in a new market.”

## UKTI opinion

Bob Collier Deputy Director, Regional Directorate, UK Trade & Investment added:



Bob Collier, UKTI

“While growth projections for many of the UK’s traditional export markets may not be as strong as in the past, opportunities do exist in these markets and further afield. The emerging economies continue to show great promise for businesses of all sizes. When embarking on export into countries where you don’t have a strong pool of experience to draw on, research becomes essential. It has been shown to make the difference between success and failure.”

# Surviving through tough times

Established in 1985, Critical Strategic Solutions enjoyed strong growth in the UK before tough economic conditions took their toll on the market. Managing Director, Dr Alan Bell responded by looking overseas for growth opportunities, ultimately building a successful business that operates in markets all over the world.

## Situation

Dr Allan Bell comments “If you are prepared to spread the net further afield, and put in the work required to get established in overseas markets, you can reap the benefits later, when more advantageous economic conditions prevail.”

In 1989 the UK was sliding towards recession, and tough trading conditions were making it hard for Critical Strategic Solutions to sustain the strong growth. The business already had customers overseas, having secured business in the USA and Singapore. Based on that success, Dr Bell was confident that export was the company’s surest route to growth, given the market conditions at home.

He further explains: “We had recognised that tough times were just around the corner and used a series of seminars to attract business from US and Asian firms wanting to better understand how to deal with a developing European market. That success told us that looking overseas was a sound strategy for growth at the time, particularly as we already had interest from potential customers in other markets.”

## Solution

In 1992, Critical Strategic Solutions, turned to the Export Marketing Research Scheme (EMRS), for help in assessing Thailand as a potential export market.

He explained: “There is a big difference between reacting to opportunities, and making a positive attempt to enter a market. First of all, you have to find out if there is a long term opportunity, then you need to understand how the market works and how local practices might affect your success. The EMRS, apart from offering hugely important match funding for

marketing research, also underpins a professional and thorough approach to that research.”

## Outcome

Since first using the EMRS scheme in 1992, Critical Strategic Solutions has turned to the scheme for help researching a dozen markets worldwide, and it has become a critical element of the company’s export strategy: “I can’t praise the scheme highly enough. It has been fundamental to a 16 year period of development that has seen the business transformed from one operating successfully in the North East of England to a global player and partner to big businesses worldwide.”



Critical Strategic Solutions is now a global player

**Critical Strategic Solutions now operates in markets the world over, from the US to Australia and New Zealand. As a result, around 90% of the businesses revenues now derive from overseas markets.**

To read the full story visit the Export Zone at [www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)

# Learn from the experts

Together with UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) delivers a popular one-day Researching Export Markets Training course. Regarded by many as an essential part of the planning process for field research overseas, the course covers selecting a market; reasons for conducting marketing research; effective use of the internet; who to speak to and what to ask; and how to collate the information into an actionable report.

The training course is suitable for both experienced researchers and those with no previous knowledge of carrying out marketing research

visits. It can also be helpful for those companies wishing to apply to the Export Marketing Research Scheme.

## Export Communications Review

**UK Trade & Investment's Export Communications Review (ECR) has been available now for 14 years and has proven to be a significant factor in helping businesses trade more successfully with export markets.**

Recent results from UK Trade & Investment's independent survey of users of their programmes show that eight out of ten ECR applicants rated the quality of the review as good or very good, nine out of ten were fairly or very satisfied with the experience while two thirds claimed the review made a measurable improvement to their business performance.

### Using the Export Communications Review

As a buyer of market research for a major telecommunications provider, Ria Barnabas realised that research companies didn't really understand her industry's issues. She identified a niche for a market research agency specialising in fast-moving telecommunications, IT and e-business. In 1997, Recom research in communications was born.

Managing Director, Ria Barnabas comments: "The Export Communications Review proved useful in a number of different ways. It helped me to clarify my thoughts and underlined the importance of thorough preparation when

approaching a new market. In an industry like ours, it is important to spend time building trust among potential customers and many of the recommendations have helped us to reflect a more global image. We took on board the suggestions to internationalise our website, for example, and I have also taken on a US national to act as a sales person for us in the lucrative American market."

Since undergoing the Export Communications Review, export turnover at Recom has rocketed, as Ria explains: "Our aim in the first year was to reach £100,000, which we achieved. The following year, export turnover topped £1 million - £400,000 from the USA and £500,000 from Finland. The Export Communications Review contained many excellent ideas, which we have implemented or are in the process of implementing. It has undoubtedly contributed to our rapid rise in export sales."

**To find out more about the ECR visit the Export Zone section of the BCC website at [www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)**

## Researching Export Markets Training course dates include:

### West Midlands Region

12th May, 3rd June, 12th November

Contact: Faye Browne,  
Coventry & Warwickshire  
Chamber of Commerce

Tel: 02476 231 122

Email: [browne.f@cwtcov.co.uk](mailto:browne.f@cwtcov.co.uk)

### East Midlands Region

31st March

Contact: Astrid Brewster,  
UK Trade & Investment

Tel: 01332 826 430

Email: [astrid.brewster@uktiem.co.uk](mailto:astrid.brewster@uktiem.co.uk)

### Eastern Region

19th March, 16th April, 13th May,  
24th June, 16th July, 5th August,  
17th September, 7th October,  
4th November, 3rd December

Contact: Jean Pomfrett,  
UK Trade & Investment

Tel: 01223 200 895

Email: [jeanpomfrett.ukti@eeda.org.uk](mailto:jeanpomfrett.ukti@eeda.org.uk)

### South West Region

28th May, 30th June

Contact: Julie Ford

Tel: 01275 370 820

Email: [julie.ford@uktisouthwest.org](mailto:julie.ford@uktisouthwest.org)

**For more information about courses in other regions contact Maggie Chilton at the BCC on 02476 472 531 or email [m.chilton@britishchambers.org.uk](mailto:m.chilton@britishchambers.org.uk)**



**The British Chambers of Commerce**  
4 Westwood House  
Westwood Business Park  
Coventry  
CV4 8HS

Tel: +44 (0)24 7669 4484  
Fax: +44 (0)24 7669 5844  
Email: [info@britishchambers.org.uk](mailto:info@britishchambers.org.uk)  
Web: [www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)

Design and production: [www.monkie.co.uk](http://www.monkie.co.uk)