



Exploring international markets

Pace Systems International

One of Europe's leading manufacturers and suppliers of advanced technology for covert incident command and control vehicles has seen an 11 per cent increase in exports in the past two years, with further growth planned to achieve its export target of 50 per cent.

Pace Systems International is a Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) based in Rugby. Founded in 2000, it manufactures electronics and software systems for police, government and emergency support vehicles.

Its exceptional design and engineering expertise, coupled with intimate knowledge of its clients' operational requirements, enables the company to provide organisations with end-to-end solutions, from concept through to custom product design and installation.

Following eight years working with clients across the UK, keeping abreast of advanced technology and investing in product development, Pace Systems International embarked on an international programme to increase its overseas presence and investigate new markets to increase its reach.

"In 2008 around one per cent of our business was based overseas," says Les Leek, managing director of Pace Systems International.

"In order to grow the business further we needed to enlist advisors who knew the routes to market and could help with marketing our product overseas."

The company became aware of UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) and the WM (SME) Internationalisation project at an event held by the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce and took its first steps towards internationalisation following a meeting with Parminder Hayer, a UKTI International Trade Advisor.



"There are a range of options and packages available to SMEs and as Pace was relatively new to exporting, we were able to discuss the company's aspirations, recommend the best approach to growth markets, as well as advising on the support and funding available," says Parminder.

The WM (SME) Internationalisation project is part of a range of support programmes available to SMEs and has been set-up to increase the number and competitiveness of West Midland SMEs operating internationally.

A key element of the support is the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grant, which is available to eligible SMEs who are looking to increase their international presence.



Pace International Systems received £2,500, with 50 per cent matched expenditure, to research new markets and attend essential trade shows across Europe and Asia.

“Overseas visits to research new markets are costly, especially if they are speculative. The funding has assisted with travel and accommodation, as well as enabling us to develop our marketing and online presence for the international markets we are currently working within,” says Les.

“So far, we have attended five shows; two in Germany, two in the Netherlands and one in Malaysia; to explore the markets at ground level and get a greater understanding of how business is conducted.

“Being able to visit the shows has been invaluable. It has opened many doors for us, not only with potential new customers, but also with potential partners.

“Developments in electronics and software technology are fast moving and to keep up with the latest advances we work with partners to offer the best solutions to our customers, so it’s important for us to build these relationships.”

The ERDF funding is only one element of the support Pace Systems International has received as Parminder explains: “During the past two years, the company has accessed a combination of the support available, ranging from the ERDF grant through to entering the Passport to Export programme aimed at businesses who are relatively new to exporting.

“Pace also commissioned an Overseas Marketing Introductory Service (OMIS) which has been invaluable in developing key commercial relationships.

“Its dynamic approach has seen the company fully embrace the opportunities open to them and by being proactive, it has been able to grow the export side of the business very quickly.

“This has included attending workshops on developing an international business strategy as well as providing them with the opportunity to network and talk with other businesses in the same position,” says Parminder.

Over the past two years Pace Systems International’s export business has grown considerably from one per cent to 12 per cent, which has enabled it to recruit three members of staff and it is now building a new office to manage increasing orders from new markets.

“We have more than exceeded our objectives in such a short space of time and could not have achieved this without the support of UKTI and the projects and programmes open to us,” says Les.

“I have been incredibly impressed with UKTI and its international trade advisors, and their knowledge has been invaluable in helping us succeed in the global marketplace.

“I have no doubt that we will be able to increase our presence overseas and achieve our ultimate goal to grow the organisation so that 50 per cent of our turnover comes from international clients,” added Les.

For further information on the WM (SME) Internationalisation project and other UKTI programmes please contact:

T: 0845 074 3515 • W: <http://www.wmchambers.co.uk/international>

For SMEs who specifically invest in research and development please contact:

T: 02476 236 406 • W: www.wmchambers.co.uk/international/new-innovation-centre.html