

Trade Talk Tuesday

Digital Strategies for Successful International Online Sales



Thank you for joining the U.S. Commercial Service, along with the West and East Michigan District Export Councils, for 'Trade Talk Tuesday: Digital Strategies for Successful International Online Sales'. This handout highlights key topics covered during the webinar, along with additional insight and resources.

Cross-border ecommerce focuses online sales to overseas consumers and includes promoting your brand awareness in addition to generating sales.

eCommerce has become a term that covers everything a business does online to sell to consumers, both domestically and overseas. It includes:

- the sale through a website;
- the online advertising that leads to a sale; and,
- the brand building that helps tie it all together as a narrative for consumers.

Are you ready to sell online?

Creating a cross-border ecommerce digital strategy for your business is an important step in the digital transformation process.

The purpose of the digital strategy is to identify areas of your business operations that require additional resources, in order to successfully sell and compete in the cross-border ecommerce online sales channels.

To begin leveraging your website as a customer acquisition tool, contact your local International Trade Specialist for a free consultation about developing your business's digital strategy.

Creating a digital strategy for your business to capitalize on the ecommerce sales channels will take some time and consideration. Ensure that you abide all international trade laws while building your product/brand reputation and overseas consumer confidence.

See <https://www.trade.gov/ecommerce> for additional info/related links

Export Resources

- **U.S. Commercial Service** — The U.S. Commercial Service is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration and provides export assistance to U.S. companies through a full range of expertise in international trade. The U.S. Commercial Service has trade professionals in over 100 U.S. cities and in more than 75 countries.

Develop your digital strategy, your overall international business strategy, choose the best market for your product or service, and evaluate potential overseas business partners by connecting with your local U.S. Commercial Service Specialist (see page 7 of handout).

- **East & West Michigan District Export Councils (DECs)** — The Michigan DEC's are comprised of experienced volunteers who work in conjunction with the U.S. Commercial Service through hands-on consulting, educational and resource services to assist small and medium-sized businesses in growing internationally.

- **East Michigan DEC** - www.eastmichigandec.org
- **West Michigan DEC** - www.exportwestmichigan.com



5 steps to help you create your business's digital strategy (excerpted from <https://www.trade.gov/ecommerce-digital-strategy>):

Step 1: Define your digital objectives

- What do you want your website to achieve? Information or sales? What business capital resources do you have for site repairs and upgrades? ROI may be a while off;
- Identify and understand the key audiences that would like to visit your site or online marketplace;
- Create a wireframe drawing of desired site features and desired customer website experience.

Step 2: Website internationalization and SEO

- Understand your current site performance through a Website Globalization Review Gap Analysis
- Fixing errors will quickly improve search engine result page (SERP) ranking
- Focus on keywords in content and link building as a part of your search engine optimization (SEO)
- Hire a professional service provider to fix all existing routine website metadata issues

Step 3: Address your back-end digital infrastructure needs

- Understand that the ecommerce sales channel is an investment in your business' future sales; your overall strategy will dictate what your needs are
- eCommerce Service Providers are recommended for a more professional, appealing site for overseas consumers

Export Resources (cont.)

- **ExporTech** is a national export assistance program that helps companies accelerate their growth in global markets through the development of written strategic plans for export growth and the connection with a wide range of experts. To learn more, contact Kendra Kuo Kendra.Kuo@trade.gov or Eve Lerman Eve.Lerman@trade.gov.

- **Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) — MI-STEP Funds** — The MI-STEP program offered by the MEDC provides direct reimbursement to eligible small businesses to develop or expand export-related activities. To learn more, contact export@michigan.org.

- **ExportMI Service Provider Directory** — Connect with local trade assistance partners critical for your export success, including logistic firms.

- **Additional Resources** — The U.S. Commercial Service partners with a number of organizations in order to better support Michigan's exporters. See our partners: <https://www.trade.gov/cs-pontiac-local-partners>



Step 4: Choosing an ecommerce sales channel mix (omnichannel)

- Use your digital strategy to select the ratio of the 4 ecommerce sales options (Your Website, eCommerce Marketplaces, Social Media, and 3rd Party Distributors)
- Conduct ecommerce market research to determine where products are being bought/imported
- Understand online purchasing habits in your target market e.g.- “Are marketplaces or website sales preferred by consumers?”

Step 5: Establish ecommerce key performance indicators

- Use your website visitor analytics to establish ecommerce key performance indicators (KPIs) so you can benchmark SEO success
- Identify areas for improvement, solicit and monitor customer feedback regularly, and utilize data to inform management, sales teams, and marketing decisions

*Thank you for
joining us!*

- The U.S. Commercial Service and the West & East Michigan DEC's



General Enhancement Considerations

Introduction to Website Globalization - *Is your website ready for international business?*

General Enhancement Suggestions:

1. Somewhere on your **Main Page**:

- Either include icon (little flag icons where you are doing business) or short note, "International Inquiries"...or other indications that you are international
- If you have any international accreditations, certifications or awards, note on the Main Page.

2. **Contact Us** page:

- Would it make sense to have page for domestic contacts and separate page for contact e-mail format, try to use a person@company.com e-mail, NOT info@company.com . If you have representation in different countries, it's nice to have dropdown selection of countries available and local contact (if this fits with your sales dept. structure)
- Show your company address as you would on an envelope, but do not abbreviate (spell out your state, etc.)
- Provide direct dial in numbers in addition to domestic toll-free/ make a note that domestic toll-free functions only within the US/ Include Skype number if available/ Use International Dial Code Format (include country code – for US +1 (803) 000-0000)
- Make it easy to ask for information/ have both e-mail address and inquiry form, in case one doesn't work/ carefully design your inquiry form: ask only for information you really need:
 - a. Suggested: Name/ Company/ Country/ Phone/E-mail/ Inquiry (must know country and company name for Export regulations and denied party screening)
- Send acknowledgement immediately, at least within 48 hours
- Allow space for:
 - a. Names – can be long, allow adequate space for multiple names and titles
 - b. Address formats differ, best to allow for adequate space or allow to free form.
 - c. Allow for longer phone numbers
 - d. ALWAYS require Country/City/Company fields (Why? [Denied Party Screening](#))

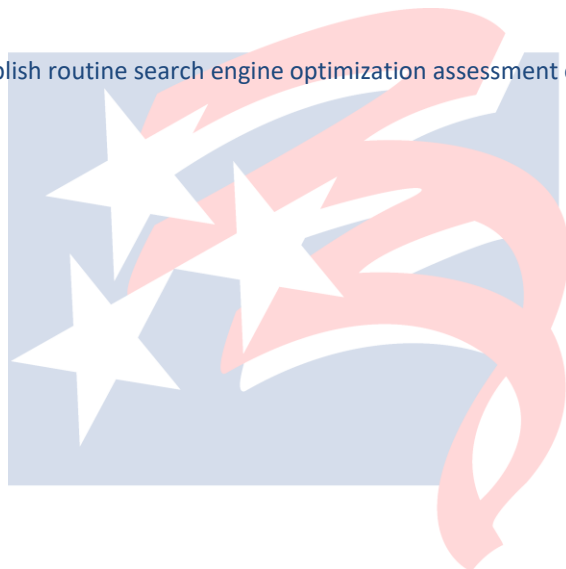
3. **General Website** time and dates/ specs:

- Specify time zone and UCT. Use 7H00 for 7am and 19H00 for 7pm
- Spell out dates (typical format is date/month/year, spelling out month avoids confusion) - remember that many countries use metric system and Celsius

- **4. Other considerations:**
- Remember “A picture is worth a thousand words”
 - Make sure that your pictures are such resolution that they load fast without compromising the quality
 - Make sure if you have a streamer of pictures, that they are timed in such a way that each can be looked at with enough detail
- Most of the World accesses the Web on a Smartphone (4” screens)
- Must have an “m” version of your website (as of April 21, 2015)
- YouTube is the second most popular search engine

General International Optimization Considerations:

1. Create Value Added Content – Blogs, linkbacks from other sites (your supply chain members, your peer, etc.)
2. Make sure your site analytics is turned on. It pays to get additional services at a cost if you see a lot of inquiries coming from online.
3. Establish routine search engine optimization assessment of your site.



U.S.
COMMERCIAL
SERVICE

United States of America
Department of Commerce

The World is Open for Your Business

Our global network of experienced trade professionals is located throughout the United States and in U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide. Whether you're looking to make your first export sale or expand to additional markets, we offer the expertise you need to connect with lucrative opportunities and increase your bottom line.



Export Counseling

- Develop effective market entry and sales strategies.
- Understand export documentation requirements and import regulations of foreign markets.
- Navigate U.S. government export controls, compliance and trade financing options



Market Intelligence

- Analyze market potential and foreign competitors.
- Obtain useful information on best prospects, financing, laws, and cultural issues.
- Conduct background checks on potential buyers and distributors.



Business Matchmaking

- Connect with pre-screened potential partners.
- Promote your product or service to prospective buyers at trade events worldwide.
- Meet with international industry and government decision makers in your target markets



Commercial Diplomacy

- Overcome trade obstacles to successfully enter international markets.
- Benefit from coordinated U.S. government engagement with foreign governments to protect U.S. business interests.

Let Our Global Network Work for You

Worldwide Recognition

As the U.S. government, we can open doors that no one else can in markets around the world.

Global Network

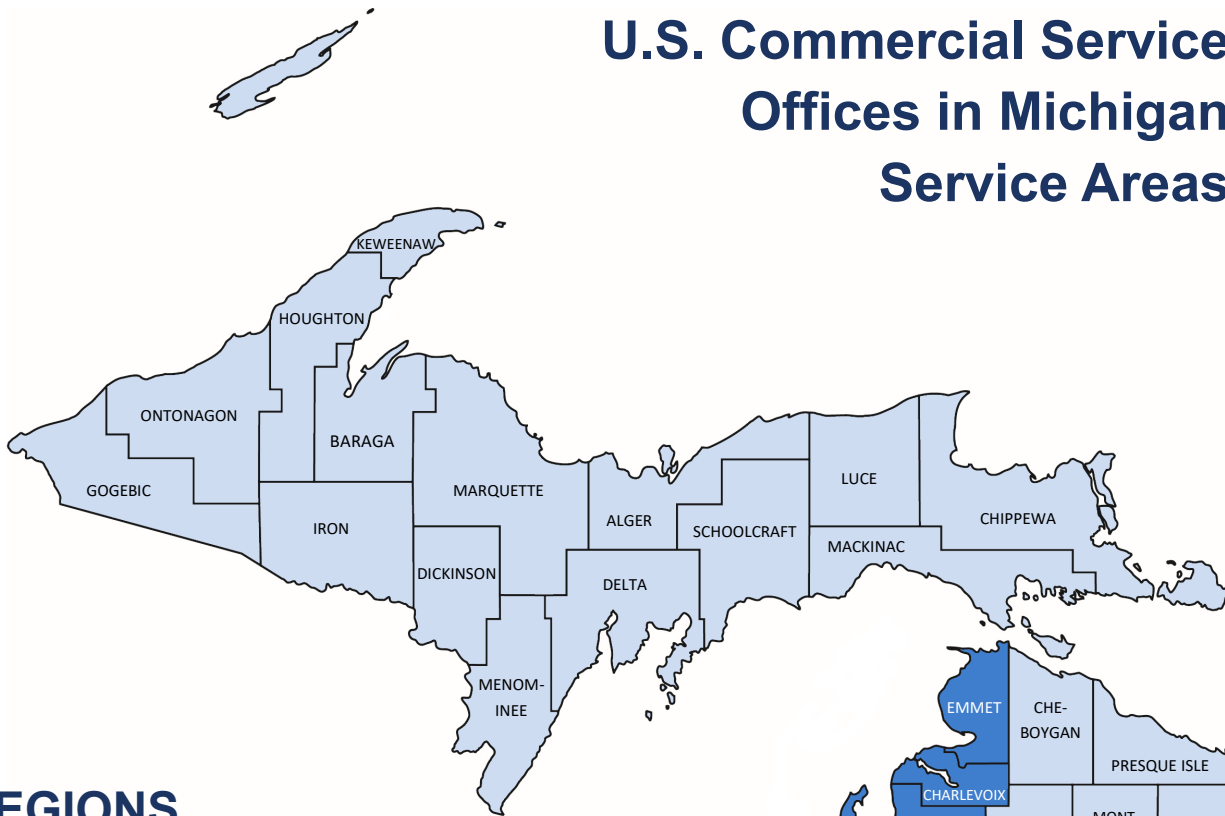
Our unmatched global network with trade experts in more than 80 countries can provide you with on-the-ground knowledge and connections.

Results Driven

Our expert, in-person counseling is unparalleled and designed to help you succeed in global markets.



U.S. Commercial Service Offices in Michigan Service Areas



REGIONS

Grand Rapids (West Michigan) Office

(616) 458-3564, (616) 481-9047

Director: Kendra Kuo, Kendra.Kuo@trade.gov

International Trade Specialist:

Allie VanDriel, Allie.Vandriel@trade.gov

Detroit & Pontiac (East Michigan) Offices

(313) 226-3006; (248) 975-9600

Director: Jennifer Moll, Jennifer.Moll@trade.gov

Senior International Trade Specialist:

Eve Lerman, Eve.Lerman@trade.gov

International Trade Specialist:

Eric Podzorski, Eric.Podzorski@trade.gov

To find out which specialist covers your industry sector, contact the Director of the office nearest you or visit the link below.

To learn more about exporting your Michigan product or service, visit:

[Trade.gov/Michigan-Grand-Rapids](https://trade.gov/Michigan-Grand-Rapids)

[Trade.gov/Michigan-Detroit](https://trade.gov/Michigan-Detroit) | [Trade.gov/Michigan-Pontiac](https://trade.gov/Michigan-Pontiac)



East Michigan District Export Council



Counseling

East Michigan District Export Council (DEC) Members provide practical, hands-on counseling for small and medium sized companies, to assist them with export sales.



Trade Education

For current trade resources and events view the East Michigan District Export Council website:
<https://www.eastmichigandec.org/>



Mentoring

Mentees have access to DEC Members who are experts in their fields such as logistics, finance, sales, marketing, accounting and international trade law.



U.S. Commercial Service Partner

DEC Members are officially appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce. Members partner with the U.S. Department of Commerce's U.S. Commercial Service to provide valuable resources for exporters.



To connect with DEC Members,
contact:

Jennifer Moll, Director
U.S. Commercial Service -
Detroit
313.212.8693
Jennifer.Moll@trade.gov



West Michigan District Export Council



Counseling

West Michigan District Export Council (DEC) Members provide practical, hands-on consulting for small and medium sized companies, to assist them with export sales.



Trade Education

For current trade resources and events view the West Michigan District Export Council website:
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To connect with DEC Members, contact:

Kendra Kuo, Director
U.S. Commercial Service -
Grand Rapids
616-458-3564
Kendra.Kuo@trade.gov

SERVICES AND RESOURCES INCLUDE:

Business expertise*

- Developing export strategies
- Identifying international markets
- Vetting international partners
- Evaluating logistics options
- Screening trade finance options
- Determining landed costs
- Understanding trade documents
- Identifying legal & regulatory issues

Website resources

- DEC Member bios
- Calendar of upcoming trade seminars
- Recorded trade education webinars
- DEC member authored trade articles
- Links to key government resources

*Initial consultation meetings are free. Further costs will be discussed with your District Export Council adviser should you require additional assistance from service providers.

DEC SPONSORS AND EMPLOYERS

AEBetancourt

Michigan Economic Development Corporation

Amway

Michigan State University's International Business Center

C Comerica Bank

Neogen Corporation

Dashmen, LLC

Plante Moran

Dematic

Redi-Rock International

Foster Swift Collins & Smith PC

RoMan Manufacturing

Grand Valley State University's
Van Andel Global Trade Center

Steelcase

HexArmor

Supply Chain Solutions

The Gluten Free Bar

Imperial Clinical Research
Services Inc.

U.S. Commercial Service