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4 Myths About Exporting

Exporting is easier than you think. Here, four common misconceptions are laid to rest.

Your business could be ignoring a huge portion of its potential customer base by selling only to American customers.

"Less than 1 percent of [American] small businesses export," says Neal Asbury, president and CEO of The Legacy Companies, a Fort Lauderdale-based company that sells American-made foodservice equipment in more than 100 countries.

The reason isn't that exporting is hard. It's that exporting is intimidating. But exporting can be just as easy as it is lucrative—provided you're willing to take the first step, which is overcoming common fallacies. Start with these four:

1. The logistics are too complicated.

Shipping companies like FedEx, UPS and even smaller, more boutique companies are eager to do business with you, so they provide great customer service, Asbury says. "If you make a phone call and tell them what you want to ship, they'll give you five or six options for getting it to its destination." ([NFIB members can save with FedEx.](#))

2. People don't want to do business with Americans.

Skooba Design in Rochester, N.Y., sells its laptop bags and travel cases in 20 different countries. President and CEO Michael Hess says he's welcomed wherever he goes. "The business world is not the political world," he explains. "Even countries that are enemies of the state, like Iran, are very interested in doing business with American companies, although there may be legal reasons that they can't."

3. Communication is a problem.

You'll have no trouble brokering a deal in a foreign country, says Martin J. Glinsky, Ph.D., chief science officer for PetMatrix LLC, a New York-based company that sells its pet food at big-box retail stores in Germany and the United Kingdom. In the business world, almost everyone speaks English. And when they don't? "If companies in other countries are looking to do business with U.S. companies, they'll usually have someone on staff who can serve as an interpreter," he says.

RELATED: [How to Address Language Gaps with Customers](#)

4. It's hard to find customers.

Finding customers abroad is surprisingly easy, according to Glinsky, who suggests exhibiting at trade shows in foreign countries. There, show organizers can assist you in navigating the local marketplace while connecting you with pre-qualified local buyers.

Asbury's favorite resources are the U.S. Small Business Administration, which offers [export loan programs](#), and the U.S. Department of Commerce, which offers [Gold Key Matching Services](#) whereby officers at U.S. embassies arrange meetings with potential customers on business owners' behalf. Along with the [U.S. Export-Import Bank](#), both agencies staff [U.S. Export Assistance Centers](#) in major metropolitan areas around the country.

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