



Minty Conant, CFO, Caledonia Spirits

Story

Caledonia is a small, artisanal, distilled spirits company in Hardwick, Vermont who was already occasionally exporting, but mainly in reaction to foreign requests. They were in very familiar territory with industry legal restrictions varying from location to location, so applying this internationally was not a leap of understanding. However, understanding that branding messages and strategies differed immensely in each country required a change of mind-set. Caledonia needed to know how to get this information for each country, and how the export process needed to be tweaked for each new set of legalities. Aminta “Minty” Conant, CFO, saw a chance to grow export sales by large leaps with tools and techniques they would learn from Expotech training. They were looking for basic guidance in all segments of exporting. Expotech offered training on all of the components central to exporting and assistance with methodical execution. This fit perfectly with their needs.

WOW Discovery

“We never knew there were so many resources available”.

Caledonia walked out of Expotech with an exhaustive list of resources to begin researching for strategy changes in each country. As a result of the watershed of information, Caledonia participated in three separate foreign trade shows. They also obtained pertinent contacts in specific countries as well as specific logistics information.

The Most Helpful Aspect?

Most helpful for Caledonia was the marketing segment which discussed clarifying separate market messages for specific target markets. With help, they were able to develop three separate messages, appropriately modified to deftly reach consumers, distributors and bartenders uniquely.

Tangible Impact

The most tangible impact was how the knowledge gained changed their strategy. It allowed them to focus their actions on appropriate tasks, first of which was to hire a sales support person to help handle the administrative details that needed attention. They could then focus on a marketing study obtained from Susan Murray at the US Export Assistance Center, Department of Commerce. Another major impact was how it changed their performance expectations from their partners and their goals. They understood better what they wanted from partnerships and have changed their contract procedures.

What they’d tell other companies

“Expotech opened our eyes to a more measured approach to exporting our products. It provided us with a wealth of resources that have helped us focus our plans for exporting and to evaluate not only export markets, but domestic. The speakers were excellent, the coursework very informative, and the counseling invaluable. We would recommend Expotech to anyone who wants to develop a process for exporting in their business.”

After ExporTech

With the market information obtained from Susan Murray at the DOC, Caledonia attended the Toronto Trade Mission, the Japan Trade Mission, the London Spirits Show, and networked with experts for the South American market, opening opportunities there. They also spoke with Lisa Henderson, Director of Client Services and Innovation Engineering Black Belt, of the Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center, who directed them to Sara Kearns, Consultant at Vermont Small Business Development Center, where they obtained a STEP marketing grant which defrayed expenses of their trade show participation. Lisa also connected Caledonia to Chelsea Lewis, Business Development Section Chief at the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, which provided assistance in locating key trade missions underwritten by her department and supporting Vermont products. Utilizing the national Food Export Helpline, they received counsel to identify best pricing and quantities for export sampling while avoiding excessive duties.

What's next?

Caledonia is cultivating the fruits of their labor in Toronto, Japan and Great Britain. They are actively pursuing more trade missions in Quebec and other countries as well.