



CHAMBER CERTIFICATION SERVICES

SUPPORT FOR OVERSEAS SUCCESS

For 26 years Simon Topman has steered Acme Whistles on a steady course through good economic times and bad, growing the business significantly and establishing a worldwide reputation for quality and innovation. Today, Acme produces six million whistles in 83 varieties - exporting them to 119 countries around the world accounts for 85% of its £9 million annual turnover.

“Joining my local Chamber was one of the first things I did and turned out one of my better decisions. It has been a vital source of support, expertise and business contacts from the word go and critical to transforming a firm established in 1870 into a modern, cutting edge business able to compete and in practically every corner of the globe.”

Having survived recession in the 80s and 90s, Simon is well placed to understand the challenges faced by many UK manufacturers today. He believes prudence rather than panic should be the watch word, but insists that manufacturers should not be tempted to narrow their horizons: “There’s never a bad time to explore export opportunities. As long as you get the right help and support and approach each market with your eyes open, products that may be familiar in home markets can still be new and different overseas.”

This is an area where he found his local Chamber to be an invaluable source of expertise and support: “There is no doubt in my mind that the contacts and support available via the Chambers played a vital role in establishing and maintaining the successful export operation we enjoy today.”

Over the years, Simon has made use of a wide range of Chamber export services and has been impressed at how seamlessly the services fit together to cover every aspect of International Trade: “In the early days, we were regular attendees at export training days, which were pivotal in providing key people with a solid grounding in everything from market research to certification and letters of credit. To this day, we continue to send new people on courses that we know from experience are extremely valuable.”

But it is the sheer range of services, and the insight that comes with them that most impresses Simon: “Help with market intelligence and troubleshooting regularly saves us time and money. A recent issue with a cancelled order from South Africa is a good example. The Chamber was able to put me in touch with people with the contacts and knowledge required to resolve the issue quickly and simply.”

Finally, Simon believes that regular contact with Chamber staff delivering export support and services plays an important role in helping him to navigate a steady course in more than 100 export markets: “Chamber Certification Services are a case in point. We use them on a daily basis, but it is rarely just a case of picking up a certificate. On almost every occasion we also come away armed with a new and important piece of information, for instance detail on a change in regulations affecting one of our markets.

“From training to certification, Chamber export services offer a comprehensive support package - without that, it would be very difficult for a small business like ours to successfully build and maintain such a broad export operation.”

Acme Whistles, Birmingham

