

Developing an Export Plan: <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Export-Plan-Development>

Once you've decided to sell your products abroad, you'll need to develop an export plan. A crucial first step in planning is to develop broad consensus among key management personnel on the company's goals, objectives, capabilities, and constraints. In addition, because they will ultimately be responsible for its successful implementation and execution, the personnel involved in the exporting process should agree on all aspects of an export plan. Of course at this stage of your business development, it may be just you, possibly a partner, and a few employees. The plan includes specific objectives, sets forth time schedules for implementation, and marks milestones so that the degree of success can be measured and can motivate personnel.

The purposes of the export plan are:

- To assemble facts, constraints, and goals
- To create an action statement that takes all of those elements into account

The following 11 questions should ultimately be addressed:

1. Which products are selected for export development, and what modifications, if any, must be made to adapt them for overseas markets?
2. Is an export license needed?
3. Which countries are targeted for sales development?
4. In each country, what are the basic customer profile, and what marketing and distribution channels should be used to reach customers?
5. What special challenges pertain to each market (for example, competition, cultural differences, and import controls), and what strategy will be used to address them?
6. How will your product's export sales price be determined?
7. What specific operational steps must be taken and when?
8. What will be the time frame for implementing each element of the plan?
9. What personnel and company resources will be dedicated to exporting?
10. What will be the cost in time and money for each element?
11. How will results be evaluated and used to modify the plan?

The first time an export plan is developed, it should be kept simple. It need be only a few pages long because important market data and planning elements may not yet be available. The initial planning effort itself gradually generates more information and insight. As you learn more about exporting and your company's competitive position, the export plan will become more detailed and complete.

From the start, your plan should be written and viewed as a flexible management tool, not as a static document. Objectives in the plan should be compared with actual results to measure the success of different strategies. Your company should not hesitate to modify the plan and make it more specific as new information and experience are gained.