



PREPARING FOR MEETINGS WITH INTERNATIONAL BUYERS

Do Your Homework

Preparing for meetings with an international buyer is as crucial as obtaining a meeting. In order to maximize your time in front of the buyer, it is important to be ready and educated. Be sure to research the company and their products of interest as well as the market. See if the U.S. has a preferential trade agreement with their country and what rules of origin need to be observed.

Utilize Helpful Resources

Take time to study the market as well as the buyer. It is vital to understand standard shipping costs, labeling requirements, tariff treatment and documentation for the country. In addition to working with your State Department of Agriculture, Export.gov and USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (www.fas.usda.gov) are great resources for doing research on potential markets and business practices.

Know and Understand Your Terms

Buyers will ask you questions about your HS Code, pricing, shelf life and more. You need to understand all these terms and come prepared to discuss company and product specifics. It can be helpful to create a brochure about your company that includes HS Code, traceability, port of export, photos, product specifications and packaging dimensions. When it comes to exporting, there are two types of pricing. Together they are known as landed cost—the price of the product at your facility and the price the buyer will pay to import it into their country. Consider this when discussing terms of payment and freight forwarding.

Prepare to Offer Product Samples

It is a good idea to let the buyer try the product, so be sure to bring the proper supplies for sampling. Buyers might decline to take the product with them if they are concerned about luggage weight and/or getting through customs. Thus, be prepared to offer to send samples, typically at your company's expense.

MEETING CHECKLIST

During the Meeting

To begin the discussion, you might ask the buyer about their needs in relation to your product. Use this information to explain why your product would be a good fit for their company. Try not to oversell your product, and don't forget to ask them questions. Assess their interest, and use the meeting as a fact-finding mission. By the end of the meeting, you should have a timeline for next steps.

Company Background Specifics

Buyers will want to know product traceability, port of export and product line as well as see samples and photos.

Company Advertising Materials

Remember “less is more,” so you’ll want materials that are simple, easy to read and possibly translated in the buyer’s native language.

One-Page Product Summary

Include product specifications such as shapes, grades, flavors, ingredients, packaging, and weight and dimension in the metric system.

Product Sampling

It is best to bring all supplies needed for sampling such as cups, plates, silverware and napkins.

Pricing Specifics

Determine how you will handle a freight forwarder, sample shipments, minimum shipment size, cargo insurance and terms of payment.

Business Cards

Be sure to bring plenty of business cards for your meeting and consider having them translated.

Don't Forget to Follow-Up

Be sure that your follow-up is timely and informative. Now is the time to send samples or any product literature the buyer requested. If your product is not a match for the buyer, use this opportunity to gain feedback and any suggestions they might offer. The buyer may be able to offer a point of contact for a company that better fits your product. Develop creative ways to stay in touch with the buyer, and keep them informed of new products. Remember, this is just the starting point for what could be a long-term relationship. Well-prepared companies experience greater export success!