

Profiles in Trade

Global Food Company Provides Expertise to Help Businesses Reach Overseas Markets

Selling in international markets can be appealing to businesses seeking to seize opportunities arising from the current dollar exchange rate or to create a buffer against sales fluctuations of the domestic economy.

Getting into outside markets creates different layers of complexity for small and medium-sized businesses to consider, however, ranging from cultural differences to the logistics of getting products to customers in other countries.

Experienced Partner

Companies such as Otis McAllister, a member of the California Chamber of Commerce and its Council for International Trade, bring valuable experience in global trade to a potential exporting partnership.

Otis McAllister handles global distribution and sales for such food and beverage brands as Sun-Maid Raisins, SunSweet Dried Plums and Martinelli's juice.

Based in San Francisco, the company maintains offices in Hong Kong, Mexico City and Bangkok. Its operations extend into more than 80 countries and represent buyers and producers around the world.

"When we take a brand to an overseas market, we put together the foreign-language marketing plans and labeling for the brand, whether in Spanish, or Chinese or another language," says Everett Golden, president of Otis McAllister. "We handle the registration of those products in the foreign countries, and make sure everything is legal. We coordinate that for each market."

The company, in existence since 1892, offers services that can help the fledgling exporter understand the overseas market, as well as keep personnel costs down by allowing firms to tap into Otis McAllister's expertise rather than retaining specialty positions.

Bridging Cultural Gap

For example, the staff at Otis McAllister can help U.S. companies bridge the cultural gap between them and foreign business partners.



Photo by Bill Mahon

Everett Golden, president of Otis McAllister, presides over a company that helps clients trade food products across time zones and national boundaries around the globe.

"When we hire new employees, we look for people who are bilingual or trilingual, and who have some experience living in a foreign country," says Golden. "It's so important in our business to be culturally aware and open-minded, so that you can deal with a lot of different people in a lot of different societies."

Keeping Costs Down

The company also helps its clients keep export costs down, linking the needs of a substantial and diverse customer base.

"We can combine the brands we represent in shipments to make it more efficient for all of them to get their products overseas," Golden explains. "Each one alone might not be large enough to make international trading worth it."

In addition, "We have our own traffic department," says Golden. "We handle all of the logistics for our clients, including shipment and documentation. We have an internal staff and we also use outside freight forwarders."

The company has resources for importers as well. It is the largest importer of jasmine rice in the United States under its Super Lucky Elephant brand. It also owns La Sirena, which has

been packing canned seafood, meats, fruits and vegetables since 1918 for Latin American and now the U.S. markets.

Long Tradition

Otis McAllister traces its origins to the pre-Gold Rush partnership between the company's founding families and Captain Frederick William Macondray, who helped provide capital for starting several global trade businesses in that era.

Its website makes clear that from the establishment of Otis McAllister & Co. in 1892 through a reorganization in the 1960s to its activities today, the company has consistently pursued its mission: "To provide our global customers the widest breadth of sources for high quality and reasonably priced foods and food ingredients."

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"Profiles in Trade" is a new, regular feature in Alert highlighting the international trade activities of member companies. Elke Peterson and Ham Dethero contributed to this article. Past profiles and more international trade information are available at www.calchamber.com/international.