

12 steps to expanding your business globally

Global interconnectivity, access to diverse supply chains, and new technology have transformed today's entrepreneurial landscape, and the spirit of creativity and innovation continue to drive the growth of SMEs across Africa, and around the world.



However, the journey to becoming a cross-border exporter may seem daunting at first. Here are 12 tips for successful international expansion.

1. Pick your markets

Different markets and consumers have different needs and preferences, online and off. Use the internet to research the markets you're considering, and to evaluate the business opportunities out there. Develop a localised strategy and business plan that will drive local success, while still keeping a strong brand image in your home market.

2. Use the internet to your advantage

Once you've shortlisted your top target markets, use online resources (such as government agencies and department information online) to check specific export requirements, and adjust your strategy accordingly.

3. Research is key

Check the commodity code for your goods to know what documents you will need. Depending on the country you've chosen to export to, there may also be customs duties to bear in mind. Do your research ahead of branching out into new markets – it will pay dividends in the long run.

4. Work out how you will ship your products

From shipping a customer's first purchase to securing repeat business, prompt and reliable delivery around the clock is crucial in gaining your customers' trust. Using a globally established logistics provider will not only make sure products are delivered quickly and efficiently, but it will also ensure any specific requirements in your destination countries are met.

5. Weigh your shipping correctly

Whether you're using domestic or international services, it's important to calculate the correct billable weight.

6. Choose the right service for your business

There's no "one size fits all" when it comes to your shipping strategy, but there are features you can introduce that v make everyone happy, such as fast shipping options.

7. Prepare your international orders with care

Ensure you have all the relevant documents you need before shipping your international orders. For example, commercial invoices, packing lists, shipping notes, a Certificate of Shipment, any certificates of origin or commercial licenses all need to be current and present.

8. Pack your shipments correctly

Your transportation provider may be able to advise you how to package your goods correctly, or even provide you with their own range of ready-to-use, self-sealing packaging in a choice of shapes and sizes.

9. Enable tracking

Now that your shipment is on its way, it's only natural to want to know where it is at all times. Using a tracking tool will help you keep tabs on it during every step of the journey.

10. Ask questions

Knowing where to get quick answers to your questions can save time and ensure peace of mind. Use free online resources to learn more and do not be afraid to ask your transportation provider any questions you may have.

11. Go above and beyond

In some circumstances, your customer's shipment may require extraordinary care, for example, additional security, temperature control, or compliance documentation. Consider industry-specific solutions if this is the case to ensure shipments arrive in the best possible condition.

12. Grow your international presence

If you think international shipping to countries even further afield could be the next big step for you in growing your business, make sure you're fully prepared to go global by taking advantage of free online resources, in-depth information, instructions and checklists available online. In today's connected world, achieving success may be much easier than you think.