EXPANDING TO OTHER COUNTRIES

Selling abroad, entering a new country, and the basic questions to answer about rules, taxes, shipping and payments.

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AT A GLANCE

- Going international can mean **selling online to other countries**, **exporting** through distributors, or **opening operations** abroad.
- Each step brings new questions: **customs, duties, taxes, product rules, payments, shipping and language**.
- Founders with roots in other countries often have a **real advantage**: language, culture and connections.

WATCH OUT

International trade rules, tariffs and tax obligations change often, and differ by country and product. Get advice from trade specialists, customs brokers, and lawyers and accountants who work in the target country.

Why it matters

New countries can open large new markets, but mistakes with customs, taxes or product rules can be costly. Starting small and getting expert help keeps the risk manageable.

Ways to go international, from simplest to most complex

Approach	What it means	Considerations
Selling online abroad	Shipping to international customers from home	Shipping costs, duties, returns, payments, local sales taxes
Marketplaces abroad	Selling through marketplaces in other countries	Marketplace rules, fees, local fulfillment
Distributors or agents	Partners who sell your product in their country	Choosing reliable partners, contracts, margins
Licensing or franchising	Others use your brand abroad. See **G-05 Franchising and Licensing Your Business**.	Legal protection and control
Your own operations	Opening an office, store or company abroad	Local registration, employment law, taxes

Questions to answer first

1. **Is there demand?** Test with online ads, inquiries or a few shipments.
2. **Can you legally sell your product there?** Check labeling, safety and import rules.
3. **What are duties and taxes?** Who pays them, you or the customer?
4. **How will you ship and handle returns?**
5. **How will you get paid** and protect against currency changes?
6. **Is your brand protected** there? Trademarks are country by country. See **B-08 Trademarks, Copyrights and Patents in Plain Language**.
7. **Do you need local partners**, staff or a local company?

Free and low-cost help (US)

- The **US Commercial Service** and **export assistance centers** for market research and introductions
- **SBDCs** and state trade offices
- **Freight forwarders and customs brokers** for shipping and paperwork
- Trade associations and chambers of commerce, including binational chambers

> EXAMPLE
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> **Amara** noticed online orders from Canada and the Caribbean. She tested international shipping for 3 months, adding duties and taxes at checkout so customers weren't surprised. When Canada grew to 12% of sales, she worked with a fulfillment partner in Canada to cut delivery times and registered her trademark there.

Common mistakes

- **Not checking product and labeling rules.**

- **Surprise duties** that make customers refuse deliveries.
- **Expanding to many countries at once.**
- **Weak partner contracts.**
- **Forgetting to protect the brand** in new countries.

Your checklist

☐ Pick one target country based on real demand
☐ Check product rules, duties and taxes
☐ Plan shipping, returns and payments
☐ Check trademark protection there
☐ Talk to a trade specialist before committing

Where to go next

- **G-05 Franchising and Licensing Your Business**
- **L-10 Selling Online: E-commerce Basics**
- **B-08 Trademarks, Copyrights and Patents in Plain Language**

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