

‘Too Good an Opportunity to Miss!’

the challenge

Lancashire-based Evans Vanodine is a family-owned business that has been around since 1919. It began by supplying farmers with agricultural chemicals, but today supplies a wide range of customers manufacturing chemicals for the janitorial, food processing and livestock markets.

Operating from a 100,000 square foot factory on a five acre site in Eccles, Lancashire, Evans Vanodine now employs over 130 people and enjoys a turnover in excess of £13 million.

Until 20 years ago the company essentially concentrated all its efforts on supplying the domestic UK market with very little emphasis on export drives or the development of new international markets.

Peter Thompson, the firm’s Export Manager, says: “Up until that time there was very little need for us to look further afield. Even when we did there was plenty to go at in markets

that would accept English labelling and which were happy to communicate in English.”

However, five or six years ago, when UK livestock began to go through a series of crisis periods, including BSE and Foot and Mouth disease, Evans Vanodine recognised that there were markets they should be looking at where English was not the language of choice for business.

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Evans Vanodine



Evans Vanodine training session

peter thompson



the solution

“Up until then,” says Peter, “even in countries like the Middle East, we had experienced very few problems in either communicating the business proposition or dealing with print. But Europe is a different matter.”

Peter says that as the business grew, (and today it exports to over 60 countries) many customers would ask who they sold to in Europe – sometimes as a test of credibility.

“In France, Germany, Italy and Spain we just didn’t even think about doing business because of the language barrier and the costs involved in conquering it.

“Eventually,” says Peter, “we recognised that the opportunity was too good to miss. We then had to set about moving into these non-English speaking markets in a controlled and targeted way.”

Evans Vanodine was already working closely with Trade Partners UK and with Business Link and other support agencies – so when the chance of some support for language translation came up – they were more than ready to accept it.

“The first thing we did was to select our target language,” says Peter. “We chose Spanish because it gave us opportunities in both Spain and South America.”

Then, through RLN NW’s partner, Lancashire College, Chorley, Peter was put in touch with a Spanish translator who began by translating the company profile into Spanish.

“We then employed a graduate in Spanish who was able to tackle the many areas of development we had to look at to move into this new market territory.” Peter warns that a move like this by a business requires both focus and commitment. “It is not something to be undertaken lightly,” he says. “You are talking around £10,000 in our case for a Spanish version of our brochure, another £8,000 for the labelling of the product sets and then you have the translation of all the technical data on top.”

Evans Vanodine advises anyone making a move into non-English speaking markets to first do their homework and then ensure they talk to all the appropriate support agencies.

“Trade Partners UK have just been fantastic,” says Peter. “I think many companies simply fail to realise what level of support is out there – either with language strategies or simple market research.”

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the benefits

Over the next two years Evans Vanodine expects to exceed £200,000 in turnover in the Spanish markets. Peter says this is the sort of return he feels is necessary to justify the investment.

“The rewards though, will be long lasting,” says Peter. “We have already been given a warm welcome in this new market and there is no doubt at all that businesses who make the effort to speak and present in the native tongue have a distinct advantage.”

While some companies make do with ‘Euro-packs’ which offer products and services labelled in four different languages, Evans Vanodine prefers to go for the dedicated translation tailored specifically to individual markets.

“You can see the difference in response when we present,” says Peter. “People appreciate the commitment we have made and the fact that we are determined to communicate effectively.”

For Evans Vanodine, the no-go area of Europe that was previously just foreign territory, is now a growing and profitable market area. “And now we’ve found out the way to do it,” says Peter, “you can be sure we’ll be doing it again. The learning curve will get less steep with every time but the rewards remain the same.”

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