



Exporter Spotlight on ABI Electronics

Based in Barnsley, ABI Electronics has been designing and manufacturing electronic diagnostic and maintenance equipment since 1983. The team have worked closely with the Department for International Trade (DIT) for over 20 years and in that time, they have grown their export markets to cover over 120 countries. Willian Santos (pictured right), the company's International Sales Manager, tells us how the relationship developed and how this once small business is now a recognised name all over the world.

Tell us more about ABI Electronics and your products

ABI's hardware and software products are 100% made by us in Barnsley and exported all over the world. The main sectors and applications covered by ABI include defence and security, transport, aerospace, energy, automotive, oil and gas, general manufacturing, industrial repair and technical education.

Over the years, ABI Electronics has expanded its customer base significantly. How has exporting helped your growth?

From early years, ABI was already exporting to places like Malaysia, India and Brazil. The decision made by our company's founders to become exporters when the company was still a start-up is the very reason why ABI continues to thrive in the global stage 36 years on.

Currently, 90% of our sales originate from exports and ABI recruited two technical sales engineers due to the increased demand and prospects of more exports in the near future.

How has DIT and your International Trade Adviser (ITA) supported your exporting journey?

Our partnership with the DIT goes back 20 years and we appreciate their support, opening doors and helping us win high-profile orders in places like Brazil, Spain, Colombia, United States (US) and Asia. We work closely with our ITA who has offered superb services to ABI, including introducing the company to her overseas DIT colleagues. Through these introductions we have acquired valuable insights, exchanged market knowledge information and found out about opportunities and contacts that were not known to us.

You have attended many trade missions during your time as exporters. How has attending trade missions benefitted your global growth?

We have attended several trade missions over the years. More recently, ABI has joined trade missions in Egypt and Brazil, as well as the Northern Powerhouse trade mission to Offshore Technology Conference (OTC) in the US. These events provided an opportunity for ABI to meet new potential and high-profile buyers, learn about current trends and refocus our efforts in these markets. Due to attending OTC, we have a list of important prospects that were not being considered until the show. Overall, we expect to generate £500K in export contracts following the recent trade missions to the U.S and Brazil in the next financial year.

You were recently recognised as a Northern Powerhouse Export Champion to mark ABI Electronics contribution and development to UK's exports. How important has this been to you?

I was very excited to become an Export Champion and it has been a privilege to participate in the scheme. It has been great to see our posts being picked up by UK ministers and international DIT members and social media accounts, as well as seeing their interest in supporting the business.

Do you have any advice for fellow exporters looking to expand their markets?

Make exporting a key goal in your business plan, build strong cooperation with international distributors and agents to ensure the brand, products and customers are supported locally. Know which of your USPs add the most value to your audience and direct your marketing efforts to communicate them to prospects in the different countries.

Be confident! British products are highly regarded in most countries. Dealing with a UK company carries a sense of security, respect, stability and transparency which most international businesses appreciate and value. You have much to gain by establishing a global presence.

The DIT have put an incredible team together in the UK and around the world. They have a can-do attitude and can advise on the best course of action in case you don't know how to start or provide qualified contacts to help you increase brand exposure and sales.

Export Summary

Key markets: Brazil, United States, Egypt, China, Korea, Pakistan, Turkey, Spain, Indonesia, France, Taiwan and Saudi Arabia

DIT support: International Trade Adviser, signpost to key in-market contacts, introduction to potential buyers, trade missions.

Achievements: Major contracts announced in 2019 include Collins Aerospace, U.S MoD, Brazilian Air Force, GE Renewable and train manufacturers CAF, ALSTOM and Bombardier. Largest single export win was valued at £1.3m to Colombia in 2013.

Awards: Northern Powerhouse Export Champion 2019, Global Technology Award at Productronica 2009.

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