

Trade training to boost exports

The ITM Worldwide Program generates export growth for SMEs and creates new career opportunities for university graduates

A Tech elektronika is a company with over 20 years of corporate history in the electronics industry. In 2011, Brigita Tomazic, of ATECH ELECTRONIKA in Slovenia, joined the ITM Worldwide Program. After one year of reinventing the sales process, sales have doubled, with the lion's share of this growth in export. The ITM Worldwide Program was implemented in Slovenia, in 2006 and since then sales revenue in participating SMEs has increased with 44% per year, according to SPIRIT Slovenia, Public Agency for Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Development, Invest and Tourism. In Estonia a year after the programme, the new export sales manager sells for €1m on average depending on sectors. This included furniture, housing, printing, construction material and electronics. In Sweden, a review in the daily business magazine, *Dagens Industri* shows that an investment of €10,000 in international trade training gave a return on investment of €500,000 in increased export per year in European markets.

‘The ITM Worldwide Concept has been developed by seven trade councils and SME organisations sponsored by the EU, and is a blend of trade training seminars, export coaching, international networking and visiting potential customers abroad.’

Jonas participated in the ITM Worldwide Program for six months in 1997. After three months, during the training, Jonas was appointed MD of BS Elcontrol, which specialises in the design and manufacture of control cabinets and automation equipment for machines and processes. Today, we are one of the leading suppliers of automation equipment in Scandinavia.

Since 1997, the company has expanded from a turnover of SEK15m (~€1.7m), to MSEK56 (~€6.4m) in 2012. The number of employees has increased from 12 to 40, and exports have

“The ITM Worldwide Program has given me a new perspective on entering international markets and, above all, the lectures, experience and hands-on knowledge the lecturers and coaches have demonstrated is what has helped me learn how to plan the company’s international market entry in a well-organised, systematic way. At the same time, it is also a training programme that helps your career and your personal growth.”

Brigita Tomažič, ATECH ELECTRONIKA

gone from 0% to 45% during these years, with a subsidiary being launched in 2007 in Lithuania.



Brigita Tomažič, ATECH elektronika in Sloveniat

In 2008, Jonas and a colleague got the opportunity to buy the company when the founder decided to retire.

The ITM Worldwide Concept – increasing exports in SMEs

We manage to bridge the ‘knowledge-doing’ gap between universities and SMEs – turning knowledge into action. We are measured not only by outstanding evaluations (50% of customers say that the programme exceeded their expectations), but by something more important: how we can increase exports in SMEs by recruiting and training university graduates and allowing new career opportunities to arise.



Jonas Kewenter, owner and managing director of BS Elcontrol AB, Sweden

A recent study done by University West, Sweden in Slovenia, Lithuania, Estonia and Sweden shows that university graduates rate job satisfaction very high in SMEs. Challenging work, more responsibility, flat organisation and being close to management makes university graduates stay in SMEs in rural areas.



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