THE NEW FACES OF AMERICAN TRADE

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF INTERNET PLATFORMS AND CLOUD TECHNOLOGIES IN THE GLOBAL SUCCESS OF SMALL BUSINESS
“THE INTERNET HAS BEEN ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL. IT’S AMAZING THE AMOUNT OF CONNECTIONS WE ARE ABLE TO MAKE NOW COMPARED TO BEFORE INTERNET. I CAN’T IMAGINE NOT HAVING IT FOR DOING WHAT WE’RE DOING.” - DR. WEI-SHIN LAI, SLEEPPHONES
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Global Innovation Forum is grateful for the advice provided by a number of government, business, university and community organizations including: American Underground, Church & State, Entrepreneurship@Cornell, Greater Des Moines Partnership, Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Partnership for a New American Economy, Salt Lake County Regional Economic Development, San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation, South Dakota Governor’s Office of Economic Development, Spark Holyoke, and World Trade Center Utah.

We are particularly indebted to the U.S. Department of Commerce and its national network of U.S. Export Assistance Centers, whose experts provided guidance on this report.

GIF is also grateful to NFTC Communications Director Veronica Turk for her work in designing the report, and to Amara Obiago for her research assistance.

This report was made possible thanks to the financial support of Google.

ABOUT GIF

The Global Innovation Forum is a nonprofit effort to connect entrepreneur, small business, development, and university communities with policymakers and select corporations to explore the opportunities and challenges of engaging in the global marketplace. GIF serves as a hub for business, university and development communities around the world to communicate with officials and corporations, discover public and private resources to help them succeed, and improve the public policy landscape to enable global innovation. GIF is a project of the 501(c) (3) National Foreign Trade Council Foundation.

To find out more visit: www.globalinnovationforum.com

Jake Colvin
Executive Director

Claire Pillsbury
Deputy Director
CONTENTS

Executive Summary ........................................................................................................... 6
Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 8
Deering Banjo – San Diego, California ................................................................. 10
KaMin Performance Minerals – Macon, Georgia .............................................. 12
Lil’ Sidekick – Polk City, Iowa ..................................................................................... 14
NaugaNeedles – Louisville, Kentucky ........................................................................ 16
LoveBook – Rochester, Michigan ................................................................................ 18
Missouri Star Quilt – Hamilton, Missouri ............................................................... 20
Oxbow Animal Health – Omaha, Nebraska ............................................................ 22
AeroFarms – Newark, New Jersey ............................................................................ 24
Advanced Design Consulting – Lansing, New York ............................................. 26
Bright View Technologies – Durham, North Carolina ........................................ 28
SleepPhones – Eerie, Pennsylvania ........................................................................... 30
Strider Sports International – Rapid City, South Dakota ........................................ 32
Pasta Shoppe – Nashville, Tennessee ......................................................................... 34
Genteel – Midland, Texas & Portland, Oregon ..................................................... 36
inWhatLanguage – Salt Lake City, Utah ................................................................. 38
Protect Your Pumps – Milwaukee, Wisconsin ......................................................... 40
Internet Platforms & Technologies ........................................................................... 42
Takeaways & Recommendations .............................................................................. 44
End Notes ......................................................................................................................... 48
Photo Credits .................................................................................................................... 49
American small businesses, from a century-old clay mining company based in Georgia to a Utah-headquartered translation-management cloud platform, are using technology to tap global markets to support local jobs.

The Global Innovation Forum interviewed small business leaders from around the United States to explore the role of internet-based marketing, sales, shipping, payments and productivity tools in enabling access to international markets and solicit their views on the importance of global markets to their business.

**Takeaways**

**American small businesses and startups are exporting thanks to the internet.** Small businesses that utilize internet platforms and services are more likely to participate effectively in global markets. In markets where these services are not fully available, U.S. small businesses exports are harmed.

Each of the small businesses surveyed relied extensively on online technologies from e-commerce platforms and payments services to social media, cloud services and productivity software to operate their businesses. Regardless of industry or size or stage of business, company executives emphasized the importance of internet technologies in connecting them to customers and partners around the world.

**Internet-enabled exports are strengthening American small businesses locally and supporting American jobs.**

Executives interviewed for this report echoed a common refrain: Global markets are important to their local success and ability to create jobs in the United States.
America’s small businesses face a range of challenges around the world, but remain optimistic about the opportunity to succeed globally.

Business leaders noted a range of challenges accessing global markets, including difficulties complying with foreign regulations, shipping and customs issues, currency fluctuations, and ensuring innovations are appropriately protected overseas. Still, they expressed optimism about their engagement overseas and advised other small businesses to look outside of the United States for new growth opportunities.

Small businesses can benefit from Federal and State global promotion programs, though some are not aware they exist.

Several business leaders pointed to the importance of Federal or State programs that contributed directly to their success in international markets.

Companies including Genteel and KaMin credited the U.S. Commerce Department’s Commercial Service as providing key advice and resources. Other companies pointed to the Ex-Im Bank and programs from organizations including the U.S. Small Business Administration, National Science Foundation and Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR) as important to their global success.

American small businesses favor more open trade.

Business leaders expressed strong views about the importance of maintaining and improving access to open markets overseas.

Policy Recommendations

Based on these interviews with small business leaders, the Global Innovation Forum recommends the following steps to U.S. policymakers to maximize the ability of American small businesses to create jobs in the United States:

1. Prioritize efforts to support an open global digital economy and eliminate digital trade barriers to ensure that American small businesses can reach consumers abroad. Where consumers and businesses abroad lack payment options, are unable to track packages, lack access to social media or other widely-used web platforms due to regulatory barriers, or cannot access the internet reliably, they are unable to engage with American businesses.

2. Empower American small businesses to compete and succeed in the global marketplace and take steps to make their journeys easier.

3. Recognize small business owners and founders as core trade stakeholders, seek to increase their input and participation in advisory committees, informal consultations and hearings, and develop new strategies to address the global challenges they face.

4. Expand Federal and State export promotion efforts and increase outreach to startups and small businesses, including by growing innovative public-private partnerships. For example, the Global Innovation Forum and U.S. Department of Commerce have seen significant interest among small businesses in Startup Global, a public-private partnership to help startups across the United States think globally from Day One and to improve understanding of public and private sector resources that enable success.

5. Maintain the commitment of the United States to open markets abroad; seek new pathways to improve access to international markets, including by ensuring that small businesses can use internet services to reach foreign consumers; and create shared rules of the road to promote rule-of-law, transparency, and fair and nondiscriminatory treatment of American businesses and workers.
INTRODUCTION

Nebraska-based small business Oxbow Animal Health uses the internet to reach customers through chat rooms and blogs worldwide.

The Miller family founded the company on their farm in Murdock, Nebraska in 1990 and today employs 150 people, while exporting to 30 countries. The team uses the internet extensively to market to and interface with customers and partners at home and abroad. Global Sales Manager, Lindsay Schmuecker highlights that, “From a marketing perspective, [the internet] has been essential to keeping the brand present overseas and ensuring that our message is cohesive.”

Oxbow Animal Health is an example of an increasingly common phenomenon – the emergence of instinctively-global American businesses powered by technology platforms.

Online platforms and services are enabling generations of American small businesses, from a century-old clay mining company to a five-year-old cloud-based translation management platform, to create jobs and improve local communities as a direct result of their success in the global marketplace.

Established American small businesses and new startup ventures are utilizing a constellation of online technologies – variously including e-commerce and logistics platforms, payments and lending products, and search, marketing and productivity solutions – to facilitate access to new customers and partners outside the United States and run operations on a global basis.

This report, based on interviews with entrepreneurs and chief executives across seventeen States, highlights the new faces of American trade, explores the tools that they rely upon to participate effectively in the global marketplace, and emphasizes the impact on their local workforces and communities.

“The world is more accessible now than it ever has been; sometimes it’s just not being afraid to reach for the business,” observed Greg Deering, who has been manufacturing unique, high-quality banjos for over forty years in Southern California with his wife Janet and almost 50 employees. Deering, who relies heavily on social media to generate word of mouth among banjo enthusiasts worldwide, added, “Our philosophy is: when an opportunity presents itself, we don’t say no – we grab ahold of it.”
IF THE INTERNET DIDN'T EXIST, I DON'T THINK WE WOULD.
- KEVIN ZALEWSKI, LOVEBOOK
Husband and wife duo Janet and Greg Deering have been manufacturing banjos for over forty years. Their philosophy is simple: build what the customers ask for with the greatest quality and value in the world.

According to Greg, attention to detail and customer care has led them to be the largest manufacturer of Banjos in the United States, with a total of 49 employees. Rather than build a banjo that they believe the customer should use, Deering Banjo works closely with the customer to craft an instrument that they want to play.

Deering Banjo’s global journey began years ago when Janet signed up to attend a music tradeshow in Frankfurt, Germany. “It only took about 3 years of that show to expand our exports to up to 30 percent of our business,” Greg said.

While tradeshows remain important, the team emphasized the vital role that the internet plays in the company’s international business today.

Jamie Latty, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, highlighted that internet search and analytics tools are cost effective tools to reach customers and gain insights into how to focus their marketing and outreach efforts.

“Our customer base recommending us unsolicited by us to other potential customers over social media is probably the number one reason people keep coming to us and why our brand is growing so strong,” observed Greg.

Many of the dealers in the company’s networks also have a large internet presence, which further adds to Deering Banjo’s international reach. Greg explains, “when we link with up with other people that are strong on the internet it allows everyone to expand and reap the benefit of all of that. It takes on a synergy that we couldn’t accomplish by ourselves.”

Deering Banjo relies heavily on social media outlets, such as Instagram and Facebook, to increase their visibility among a close-knit community of banjo players.

Latty underscored how tools, such as Hubspot, allow them to increase productivity by providing a comprehensive inbound marketing tool that binds together email, e-commerce and more. It allows the team to see everything in one area and take the appropriate action.
While the Internet and social media play an important role in sharing feedback of existing customers and growing the customer base, the personal interaction remains vital.

**Deering Banjo has mastered the balance between online service platforms with offline care.**

“You can’t be all electronic. You have to have that warm and fuzzy voice on the phone that actually speaks to customers when they call,” says Janet.

Having found success internationally, the Deering Banjo team seeks to continue developing overseas markets. With a new distributor in China and a recent trip to India, they are eager to share their beautifully crafted banjos with new customers in fast-growing markets for American exports.

Deering Banjo faces several challenges with overseas markets. Shipping costs and tariffs tend to be high for banjos, and Latty explains that the company has to keep a close eye on exchange rates and other factors that could impact sales.

Another challenge has been complying with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) regulation, a well-intentioned regulation pertaining to wood culled from endangered species, including rosewood, which the company had used to make banjos. Since the regulation called for extensive documentation on all instruments shipped internationally that contain any amount of rosewood, Deering Banjo discontinued the use of rosewood scraps and turned to alternative materials, which means that those scraps are no longer put to good use by the company.

For SMEs looking to engage in global markets, Greg stresses the importance of understanding a given market during the early stages of your growth: “We were very fortunate very early on in our company to understand how to make sure you get paid when you export to different countries that have laws that make it impossible to collect a bad debt.” Latty adds that it is also important to know what is out there – for instance they just recently discovered EXIM Bank, despite being in business for over forty years. “It is a hugely valuable resource that we were working on implementing. We wouldn’t have known it existed had we not found out about it from the World Trade Center. There are definitely programs that could be a very easy fit to help [small businesses and startups] make the global reach a little less daunting.”

While they have not yet worked extensively with government organizations, Greg noted that the Commerce Department has reached out to Deering Banjo and shared different avenues of resources to provide assistance in growing internationally, including U.S. embassies abroad for instance.

Greg adds, “the world is more accessible now than it ever has been, sometimes its just not being afraid to reach for the business. Our philosophy is: when an opportunity presents itself, we don’t say no – we grab ahold of it.”

“**THE WORLD IS MORE ACCESSIBLE NOW THAN IT EVER HAS BEEN... OUR PHILOSOPHY IS: WHEN AN OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF, WE DON’T SAY NO – WE GRAB AHOOLD OF IT.**”

More than 700,000 U.S. jobs supported by goods exports from California in 2015

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

POP. 1.35 MILLION
"Delivering value from the ground up" is the mission of KaMin Performance Minerals, explained CEO Rankin Hobbs.

KaMin is one of the leading global suppliers of high-quality kaolin clay. Since 1926, KaMin has been mining and producing the fine-particle, high-brightness clay in three different locations in Georgia: Macon, Sandersville and Wrens. The company also has operations in Brazil, managed by their subsidiary CADAM.

Kaolin clay is an essential component for manufacturing rubber, plastic, paint and paper, among other industrial applications. “Our customer base consists of major multinational corporations as well as small manufacturers all over the world,” noted Hobbs.

The company first engaged with international customers in 1969 and has since grown to become one of the largest U.S. exporters of kaolin clay. With customers in 65 countries, Europe and Asia are the most important markets for the company.

To help access the large potential customer base in China, the company has translated its website into Chinese.

“As our export market expanded over the years, our workforce has as well,” observed Hobbs. Today, over 350 employees fill the company’s three Georgia locations. KaMin’s business supports the jobs of nearly 100 additional support services in the Georgia area. Hobbs described the important role that internet-enabled systems play in connecting KaMin staff, logistics partners, and customers and noted how important an open global internet is for his international business.

KaMin utilizes a web-based Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) platform to help execute its global business, which supports internal planning, manufacturing, and order cash processes. Hobbs noted how, “Our systems transfer information seamlessly to optimize efficiencies on export orders with our supply chain partners.”

Mobile platforms can simplify logistics for global small businesses. For example, bar code instruments can help with packaging and shipping procedures, shared Hobbs.

By immediately populating data into a centralized system for tracking, the company is able to eliminate manual processes and potential for error, not to mention save time.

Kaolin clay is found around the world, challenging the company
to convince customers to pay for the product and have it shipped thousands of miles from Georgia.

While social media does not play a large role in the business-facing kaolin clay industry, KaMin sets itself apart from competitors by sharing technical documentation and hosting webinars via their website.

The company also utilizes LinkedIn, Google+ and YouTube as avenues for customers worldwide to learn more about the kaolin clay and to connect with the KaMin team.

Finding the right partners helps small businesses prepare for and resolve issues that come from global business, advised Hobbs. “We learned a long time ago that selection of the right partners to represent us internationally is crucial," explained Hobbs. Those partners can help resolve issues that may arise on the ground.

Hobbs noted that the U.S. Commercial Service provides an array of affordable services to small businesses looking to succeed in global markets. Even small businesses that are not new to the exporting game, like KaMin, can benefit. The U.S. Commerce Department’s Gold Key services “helped us to identify and select a new agent and distributor in Asia,” while trade specialists at U.S. Export Assistance (USEAC) centers have helped with market research on specific activities and provided information on customs in different markets.

“An additional benefit of our relationship with the U.S. Commercial Service has been the introductions they have made for us to both State of Georgia and Small Business Administration resources,” said Hobbs.

For entrepreneurs looking to go global, Hobbs shares three key pieces of advice: “Find good supply chain partners to help you, contact your local USEAC for advice, and take advantage of local programs and networking groups for mentorship, education and advice.”

MACON, GEORGIA

POP. 91, 351

SMEs account for 89% of Georgia goods exporters

KAOLIN CLAY IS USED IN MANUFACTURING A WIDE RANGE OF PRODUCTS, SUCH AS PAPER, PAINT, CRAYONS AND PLASTIC - TO NAME A FEW.
A mother and creator, Amy Vohs built Lil’ Sidekick to eliminate the drop game her infant son liked to play.

At 6 months old, Vohs’s son began chucking everything in sight off of his high chair. She found that other tethering products on the market were either a hassle to clean or would fling the spoon back violently at her son. Vohs’ solution was to create a product that addressed both issues.

“I want to create products that make parents’ lives easier and kids happy,” she explained.

Foreign markets are already an important part of Lil’ Sidekicks business and Vohs explained that international sales could make up a greater share of overall business than domestic sales in the coming year.

“We see a huge opportunity in the international market for our product,” said Vohs, explaining that it is easy to communicate the appeal to parents worldwide.

**Based in Polk City, Iowa, Lil’ Sidekick is 100 percent Made in the USA.**

Vohs is a sole proprietor who employs a network of American suppliers and consultants to make it all happen. Her business helps support Midwest manufacturers, including a plastic injection mold facility located a few hours from Polk City along the Mississippi River and a packaging plant in Minneapolis. Vohs also contracts with four consultants who are based in the Midwest to help run her business, including one to specifically handle international distribution and another committed to managing the company’s presence on e-commerce platforms.

Vohs said that businesses like Lil’ Sidekick may be small but their international business helps them contribute to the local economy by bringing in revenue and working with suppliers, partners and the community.

While trade shows and a network of distributor relationships play important roles in Lil’ Sidekicks’ access to overseas markets, the internet is an increasingly important tool for Vohs’ small business. Powered by Wordpress and PayPal checkout, her website acts as a marketplace for customers to purchase Lil’ Sidekick products. Her consultants and distributors also leverage e-commerce platforms including Amazon to reach new audiences. For example, Vohs noted that her distributor in Canada managed her sales over Amazon.ca.
Social media platforms provide an important medium for Vohs and her team to connect with customers and markets worldwide.

Lil’ Sidekick has a presence on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest. The company also has its own YouTube channel, where it shares product information with a global audience.

Cloud-based tools enable the team to communicate and share information from different locations in the Midwest and around the globe.

“We rely a lot on Dropbox, QuickBooks, Square to communicate with international markets,” noted Vohs, adding that “simple” Gmail is the company’s primary tool for communication worldwide. Vohs said she is constantly looking for new avenues and tools to help keep things simple and efficient as she expands.

Logistic carriers simplify shipping procedures for small businesses with a global footprint. When it comes to the paperwork, “FedEx and DHL just file it electronically for me and I don’t have to worry about it,” explained Vohs.

That said, “shipping is a huge obstacle for us,” highlighted Vohs, explaining that, “we are growing substantially, but it’s difficult with the shipping costs and finding affordable ways to export.”

Government programs have been essential to Lil’ Sidekick’s global growth, said Vohs. “The Iowa Economic Development Authority has played a huge role in our success,” noted Vohs. The center provides a variety of services including consulting, references, and grant assistance to small businesses in Iowa. The IEDA, she noted, provided a grant to participate in a trade show that covered almost three-quarters of her expenses, “so it almost takes the risk out of it for us,” observed Vohs. She also emphasized the role of the local Small Business Development Center in supporting her global journey.

Vohs characterizes herself as apolitical, but she is a strong advocate for open markets. This issue is pretty close to me,” said Vohs. “My concern is that if we start adding new tariffs or taxes [on imports from other countries into the United States], then these other countries are going to do the same thing in response.” She notes that her products often enter foreign markets duty-free thanks to existing trade arrangements, “but if that were to change, it could ruin our international distribution altogether.”

Vohs tells entrepreneurs looking to expand their business internationally to be optimistic. “The world needs good products,” Vohs said, “And you should look into it for the growth of your business.” She tells entrepreneurs to not be afraid and suggests there are great resources and advisors available to help.

In 2016, exports to FTA markets accounted for 57% of Iowa exports.
Mehdi Yazdanpanah, the Iranian-born founder of Kentucky-based NaugaNeedles, planted the seeds for his business as a Ph.D. student in electrical engineering at the University of Louisville.

Working at the University’s Electro Optics Research Institute and Nanotechnology Center, he developed technology to produce specialized Needle-Probes that serve as ultra-sensitive nano-sensors, which allow researchers to scan and image surfaces at a very high resolution.

In 2007, after finishing his degree, he saw an opportunity to commercialize his university-born invention into a business. Based in Louisville, Kentucky, NaugaNeedles is located just down the street from where his idea was hatched. The company has 4 full-time employees along with 5 contractors supporting their operations in Louisville to produce his line of American-made equipment.

One of the aspects that intrigued him most about turning his invention into a business was the potential to create jobs. “I didn’t get a Ph.D. to get a job, but to create jobs for myself and others,” Yazdanpanah said.

As an immigrant, living in the United States with a visa, Yazdanpanah wasn’t convinced at first that he was in the right position to start a business. After learning about the programs available, Yazdanpanah changed his tune. “The United States is the best place for a startup to start and there are a lot of great programs that you can benefit from,” explained Yazdanpanah, adding, “If you have a great idea, you can make it happen.”

Foreign sales make up a large portion of the company’s overall business. “More than 50 percent of our revenue comes from exports,” observed Yazdanpanah. He counts customers in over 25 countries and highlights European markets as among the most significant for his business.

Most of NaugaNeedles international sales are managed by distributors, with support from the Louisville team to ensure the custom orders meet the customer’s needs.

Yazdanpanah explained that the company’s exports allow him to sustain more employees in Louisville.

Even though the company works through distributors rather than offering products direct-to-consumers online, Yazdanpanah notes that, “all of our business is done online,” including sales and marketing.

NaugaNeedles utilizes online platforms to market its products to the world. “We do a lot of email marketing, website marketing; we send press releases via LinkedIn and market via Google advertisements and AdWords,” noted Yazdanpanah. Search engine optimization is also an important tool for the company, which tries to ensure that when someone searches for words such as “microfabrication” online, NaugaNeedles is among the first results to appear.

While the company doesn’t rely on consumer-facing review platforms such as Trustpilot or Yelp, the scientific community
technology to develop and commercialize products. Other funding from the Small Business Administration, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Science Foundation also helped to make Yazdanpanah’s journey possible. “Without those programs, I would now be working for someone else,” Yazdanpanah chuckled.

Yazdanpanah suggested that trade agreements could benefit companies like his. “Let us do our job and don’t put any tariffs on the kinds of products he sells to the world.”

The NaugaNeedles founder also encourages entrepreneurs to think about the prestige that “Made in the USA” products and services have in global markets. “It means quality and integrity,” said Yazdanpanah.

Yazdanpanah said some new markets have been difficult to break into, but persistence can pay off. “It has been difficult to enter the Japanese market, but now after about 5 years of talking we have started selling there rapidly, which we are really excited about,” he said. He noted that lessons he learned from engaging in the Japanese market made it easier to enter other countries.

NaugaNeedles has benefited from Small Business Innovative Research grant funding, which helps small businesses in high

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY
POP. 597, 337

SMEs account for 79% of Kentucky goods exporters

The New Faces of American Trade
LoveBook's mission is simple: “It’s spreading love and helping to build relationships by connecting people,” explained Co-Founders Rob Patterson and Kevin Zalewski.

The Rochester, Michigan-based small business allows people to express feelings, whether romantic, friendly or familial, via customized bound books. What started as an extracurricular activity between four friends has turned into a growing business seven years later with twelve employees in Michigan serving a global customer base.

While the team focused on the U.S. market initially, they soon realized the demand abroad could help them grow.

Initial interest came from Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and Europe. “Our technology is based on the Latin keyboard, so anybody who can make a book with that keyboard is who we targeted at first,” recalled Zalewski.

Today, international markets play an important and growing role for the business.

“Two years ago international sales were about 12 percent of our business, and over this past Christmas we were at about 30 percent international,” said Patterson.

The company is now looking to make the technology available in different languages in order to reach a bigger portion of the world.

Their data shows that converting initial interest in their product to actual sales also vary by culture. “The way Americans spread love is different than the way people spread love in Korea and India,” explained Zalewski. The team is now looking to expand and localize content and functionality of their book builder to appeal to different countries.

LoveBook’s founders note that their engagement in the global marketplace has supported the ability to expand their staff in Rochester. Not only that, but, “based on insights from our Facebook marketing, the overseas sales are higher margin items as well,” said Zalewski, adding, “they tend to convert faster and better than our American customers.” In addition, their global sales add to the bottom line of LoveBook’s U.S.-based printer partners.

“If the internet didn’t exist, I don’t think we would,” said Zalewski.

Patterson explained that, “The nature of our product – it’s not something you can buy in a store, so obviously a web-based business is going to be hugely reliant on the internet.”

The internet plays a role in three key parts of Lovebook’s global business process: Interfacing with customers, managing a global network of printers, and running the business out of Michigan using all cloud-based systems.

“Our international outreach right now is mostly controlled by social networks with Facebook probably at number one,” Zalewski said, explaining that the social network allows LoveBook to target specific countries and demographics.
“We also benefit from [ranking high in] your standard search engine keyword searches,” added Zalewski. LoveBook also relies on website analytics to observe potential demand and to understand different demographics as they approach new markets.

LoveBook has had to navigate its share of international challenges. International customs and shipping is their biggest pain point. LoveBook uses economy shipping to minimize cost, but often finds that, outside of the United States, tracking methods and fulfillment can be unreliable or nonexistent, resulting in delays or missed deliveries.

The paperwork and uncertainty around customs procedures can delay and add uncertainty to their international deliveries. “We want everything to go across the border digitally” instead of worrying about paperwork being held up at customs, said Zalewski. He added that, “a lot of these countries that we want to work with are technologically capable, but they just don’t have it in place yet.”

Currency fluctuations also impact international sales. Patterson noted that the increased strength of the U.S. dollar against key foreign markets such as Australia makes LoveBooks more expensive for Australian customers.

The founders advised other entrepreneurs looking to take their business global that large internet platforms can provide helpful perspective when looking for new markets. “Facebook has done a lot to help us find new markets and use new tools,” said Zalewski. He also highlighted the support that Google has provided in going global: “We met with [Google] a few months ago at one of their Michigan offices and they’ve given us tremendous insights.”

They also emphasized the importance of understanding your current market. “Don’t assume that, if you’re selling well in the United States, it’s going to sell the same way somewhere else,” cautioned Zalewski.

“IF THE INTERNET DIDN’T EXIST, I DON’T THINK WE WOULD.”
When Jenny Doan and her husband lost their savings during the Great Recession, daughter Sarah and son Al convinced her to build a business around her passion for quilting in the small town of Hamilton, Missouri.

Today, Missouri Star Quilt boasts a workforce of 450 American employees of which around 85 percent are women, thanks to a devoted global customer base.

“We have the world’s largest selection of quilting fabrics,” observed Jenny. “In terms of our customer base, international markets are very important for us. We have big customer bases who have been bit by the quilting bug in the UK, Germany, elsewhere in Europe, Australia and New Zealand.”

Co-founder and son Al Doan built their website and e-commerce platform from the ground up and notes that is their main portal to the world. The Doans also point to Facebook and other social media tools as other components of their marketing strategy.

“YouTube is a big platform for us,” said Jenny. She highlighted that, “we translated several of our tutorials into multiple languages so people around the world can get to know us,” which helped their small business take off.

Today, Missouri Star Quilt is the most popular quilting channel on YouTube, which helps drive their global sales.

Missouri Star Quilt uses its web platform and social media tools to elevate their brick-and-mortar presence and support their local community. In the company’s YouTube video overview, Jenny flags for viewers that Missouri Star Quilt offers, “the largest selection of pre-cut fabrics in the world both online and at our lovely store in Hamilton, Missouri.”

A separate website, Visit MSQC, accessible from the Missouri Star Quilt homepage, describes the suite of shops, lodging, restaurants and tours in Hamilton that benefit from the business. Missouri Star Quilt’s reputation and selection attracts tourism to Hamilton from around the country and the world.

The company faces several challenges as a global business. For one, all of Missouri Star Quilt’s fabric is cotton, a global commodity. “When the tariff on cotton goes up, our costs go up,” notes Al. “There’s a large global effect on the cost of goods that we consume as a company.”
International customs have also proven challenging, particularly when an order gets caught in customs and there is no visibility into what is holding it up. “Governments could put forth some more effort to make their agencies and regulations easy to understand,” Al suggested. When you have to look through endless pages to find your tariff code, or figure out why a shipment of goods is held up in a customs warehouse hundreds of miles away, “it’s a pain in the neck,” he observed.

Tariffs can also limit the company’s exports.

“We’re in a space where we’re selling fabric to ladies in Ireland,” said Al, as opposed to multinational businesses with legal and customs compliance departments. “We will sell our customers whatever they want to buy, but when they get dinged for a $40 tariff when they receive the product, they’re never coming back, there’s nothing that I can do about it.”

Al said that the company is constantly asking, “how can we better serve our customers in terms of shipping availability and costs?” He suggested that anything that governments could do that would let them move products back and forth from the United States into a country like Canada “would open up a huge market for us,” but says that even among our closest trading partners, there are still too many unnecessary hurdles for small businesses to overcome.

Even with those challenges, the Doans emphasize the importance of international markets for other businesses looking to grow. “You can feel pretty alone when you’re out there as a small business going global, but don’t be intimidated,” advised Jenny. “My advice? You Dive in and understand production processes, costs and customers.”
Guided by five generations of family farming expertise, John Miller has been developing unique, top-of-the-line animal care products for over 30 years. Built on the Miller family farm in Murdock, Nebraska, Oxbow Animal Health has revolutionized small animal nutrition by producing premium hays, specialty foods, professional recovery products, treats and accessories.

Founder and CEO John Miller has suggested on more than one occasion that, “it’s part dumb luck that we ended up where we are today.”

He attributes much of this so-called luck to the internet, which took off and allowed Oxbow products to spread through chat rooms and blogs worldwide.

With nothing like it on the market, customers from all over the globe began placing requests to purchase their products.

Today its products are available in 30 countries globally, with foreign markets accounting for 25 percent of the company’s revenue with Hong Kong and the EU as the largest export destinations.

While all of their operations are based in Murdock, the company does business with a number of partners in other countries that help fulfil their global distribution strategy.

“From a marketing perspective, [the internet] has been essential to keeping the brand present overseas and to ensuring that our message is cohesive,” shared Lindsay Schmuecker, Global Sales Manager at Oxbow Animal Health.

Schmuecker pointed to the company’s engagement on Facebook as particularly important to their international outreach.

Schmuecker added that the company receives and takes into account feedback from their global network when they host live events or post new products on their page.

The influx of international customers posed a new set of challenges for the Murdock-based company.

Regulatory changes around the world is the biggest challenge for the business.

“China is a market we feel has very strong potential for our brand, but we can’t import our products into the market because they are derived from Timothy Hay, which is restricted in the marketplace,” noted Schmuecker, who observed that the restriction has scuttled their strategy for engaging there.
Language and cultural differences, including customer expectations that vary across countries, are also areas that require research and due diligence and appropriately setting internal expectations.

Miller, the founder, was entrepreneurial in his pursuit of global markets, seizing any opportunity to enter new markets abroad.

“We made commitments to ship our products overseas, without really knowing a whole lot about how we were going to make that happen,” explained Miller. Figuring it out as they went along, the company discovered and utilized great partners and advisors, including government agencies, associations and other exporters.

Resources such as the Midwest International Trade Association, which Oxbow joined when it first began to engage in international markets, offered useful programming featuring other companies and advisors from places like the Nebraska Department of Economic Development to freight forwarders who were already engaged in international markets and able to provide advice.

“The U.S. Department of Commerce has been a lot of help for us as well,” said Schmuecker. She also highlighted the Food Export Association of the Midwest, which helps primarily with ensuring the company’s packaging is in compliance and help offset the cost of attending international tradeshows.

She urges entrepreneurs to be patient as they enter the global marketplace. “You have to be committed to international, because it’s not easy and there will probably be costs involved that you didn’t plan on,” said Schmuecker, advising that “you have to be willing to find the fun in it – to see your products overseas and build relationships with people globally.”

“Don’t be afraid to reach out for help,” she added, “you are not the only one who is facing these challenges!”

MURDOCK, NEBRASKA
POP. 267

SMEs account for 81% of Nebraska goods exports
New Jersey-based AeroFarms is revolutionizing the agriculture industry one leafy green at a time. Utilizing 95 percent less water than traditional farms, the company grows an array of lettuces and herbs in indoor vertical farms that can be located near highly populated cities such as Newark. The innovative company can also grow 100 times more kale, arugula, and watercress than your traditional farm that relies on sunlight and soil.

In 2011 David Rosenberg founded a vertical farming company that he merged with AeroFarms, which had been around since 2004. Rosenberg brought with him a host of knowledge, experience and leadership from his previous entrepreneurial endeavors. Their mission is to “build farms all over the world so that people have access to fresh, great tasting, safe produce,” explained Rosenberg.

With a pilot project in the Middle East under their belt and the support of 118 employees, the company is expanding domestically and is just beginning their global journey. AeroFarms is in the midst of developing vertical farms throughout the United States and across 4 continents. “We very much have a global outlook,” said Rosenberg, highlighting China and the United Arab Emirates as their areas of focus at the moment, even if they don’t yet have a large global customer base.

Rosenberg added that, “we are building a company to export our technology, our know-how and our systems all over the world.”

When it comes to determining which markets to enter, the economics of building a farm, and energy prices and availability are a few of the important factors. “In the Middle East, there isn’t much arable land or water,” said Rosenberg, emphasizing a pain point that AeroFarms can address.

The internet plays an integral part in facilitating AeroFarms’ ability to deliver its innovative technology on a global basis. The vertical growing towers function more like data centers than farms. They are filled with sensors that capture data during every step in the planting process, which are used to perfect growth algorithms.

Social media platforms share the company’s story and mission with audiences around the world.

“We don’t even have a PR budget,” noted Rosenberg. AeroFarms’ marketing team manages its company Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube presence, which easily attracts interest from the media and customers. “It builds upon itself and creates a lot of
“We have a world class leadership team,” said Rosenberg. The experienced group at AeroFarms sets the company up for success. With best practices in mind from past work in global markets, Rosenberg and his colleagues know what to expect and how best to overcome potential barriers.

While government programs and services have not played a role in AeroFarms’ global journey yet, that could change in the near future. Rosenberg mentioned taking a second look at facilities provided by groups like the Export-Import Bank and the International Finance Corporation as they grow globally.

For entrepreneurs thinking about expanding their business internationally, Rosenberg highlights the importance of timing and having a good partner. “Going international is not incremental, its transformational,” said Rosenberg. “Make sure you are ready for it.”
Alex Deyhim, Founder and CEO of Advanced Design Consulting (ADC), and his team have been building custom complex scientific components and instruments for clients worldwide for over 20 years.

Nestled in the Finger Lakes region in Lansing, New York, Deyhim and his team of engineers cover everything from design and manufacturing to the installation of complex systems for large government laboratories and corporations. The company offers a range of capabilities from manufacturing, testing and installing high-resolution extreme-ultraviolet-light (EUV) microscopes to writing, designing and building software, hardware and control panels to guide robots in industrial applications.

ADC began at Cornell University’s Business and Technology Park and has established itself as a world leader in scientific and research markets.

According to Deyhim, global markets are essential for his small business. Foreign sales account for roughly 50 percent of ADC’s overall revenue.

Access to other markets “allows small businesses to ride the wave of an economy more easily,” he said, which is especially important when you don’t have the same luxuries of larger companies. “If one market goes down, let’s say Germany is experiencing issues or going through an election, you have business in Brazil or in South Korea or in Japan.”

His business relies on the global internet to maintain an international presence. “Without it we would sink,” observed Deyhim, adding that “with the internet, the world is at your fingertips.”

He advised that attending conferences is valuable and provides critical face-to-face experience, but that the internet provides a more cost effective way to connect with clients all over the world.

Deyhim noted that the benefit is magnified for small businesses like ADC, which have less disposable income to spend on cultivating face-to-face relationships at international conferences.

While advertisements in international journals helped ADC gain international exposure early on, Deyhim says his website,
comprehensive online product catalog, a slick YouTube video introduction to the company and online search are really all his company needs to get discovered globally.

Deyhim notes that foreign markets bring their share of cultural and regulatory challenges for his business. He shared some of the lessons he learned along the way, like how in Spain certain projects require more than a dozen signatures or how in Japan his company could not do business directly with a client but rather through a local representative.

For Deyhim, online search and resources from some of the large shipping and logistics companies helped him and his colleagues navigate these country-specific requirements.

One of Deyhim's favorite experiences when traveling to foreign countries is seeing how customers and partners abroad really look up to American businesses, even the small ones like ADC. For that reason, Deyhim urges fellow entrepreneurs to “not even question whether or not to go global.”

Outside of the United States, businesses can find “unlimited markets that are easily connected thanks to the internet,” he said. “While you might be struggling in the U.S. market, you could go overseas and grow tremendously.”

“It is overwhelming in the beginning, but don’t be discouraged,” advises Mr. Deyhim. “Some of our competitors closed down in the United States because they were so focused on the domestic market. International markets allowed us to survive.”
When Jennifer Aspell joined Bright View Technologies in 2010, eight years after its founding, the Durham, North Carolina-based company did not have a global presence. It wasn’t long after her arrival that the company began to export their innovative American-made LED lighting solutions and expand their global footprint.

While the United States remains the largest market for Bright View Technologies, European and Asian markets have proven to be significant sources of growth for the company’s advanced lighting products.

“We recognized that some of the high growth areas were in regions outside of North America, particularly those who are energy-constrained and might move toward LED lighting quicker,” recalled Aspell.

With fewer than 20 employees when she arrived, Aspell said the company relied on partnerships to reach these new markets abroad. Most of the business is channeled through distributors, though Bright View retains an employee in China to provide technical marketing support locally. The company also benefitted from lessons learned and policies developed by their Richmond, VA-based parent company Tredegar Corporation, which acquired Bright View in 2010.

Aspell noted that exports, “increase our sales volume, so that increases our manufacturing output” and ability to hire more employees to power their operations in the United States. The majority of Bright View Technologies’ manufacturing is based in Durham and the company also uses a Tredegar facility in Pennsylvania.

“We recognized that some of the high growth areas were in regions outside of North America.”
For Bright View, the internet serves as a portal for prospective clients to gather more information about the company and browse technical documents and as a platform for customers to order products and samples. The website also provides the opportunity for customers to interact with the sales team.

“Our website tends to be a good driver [of new customers],” explained Aspell. “Last year we had our website translated into Chinese so that customers can access all the same information in Mandarin as you can in English,” noted Aspell.

Online videos are an important way for the company to share information on product use, attributes and manufacturing. Aspell noted that the company hired a professional to produce a series of explanatory videos, which they posted to YouTube and embedded on their website to help prospective and current customers get to know them better.

Internet-based communication tools allow small businesses like Bright View to communicate with partners worldwide. “We use WebEx frequently to hold meetings across continents,” Aspell shared.

Bright View Technologies global journey has not been without its obstacles.

“Intellectual property is always a challenge,” said Aspell, adding that they take measures to protect their IP, such as applying for patents in key markets around the world – not just in the United States.

There are also logistical challenges of shipping their products and systems. “It’s a slow boat across either ocean,” noted Aspell.

While complying with foreign regulations can be burdensome, Aspell notes there are cases where new rules or rebate programs to promote energy efficiency can help their business grow. The company’s products can support economies’ transitions to environmentally-friendly lighting solutions. “Our products help our customers meet those kind of regulations,” explained Aspell.

Aspell tells entrepreneurs thinking about taking their company global to “hire people who have done it before.” It is a steep learning curve to figure out how to scale your business in the domestic market, let alone abroad. She adds, “When you have that network setup already, you can just leapfrog a whole bunch of steps and time.”
Interrupted by patient calls at night, Dr. Wei Shin Lai’s husband, Jason Wolfe, urged her to listen to relaxing music to help her fall back to sleep. The problem? She was unable to find a pair of headphones that were comfortable to sleep in and that would stay in place through the night. Frustrated, the two decided to create a sleep-ready pair of headphones themselves.

In 2007, after work one day, the couple built their first pair of SleepPhones on their kitchen table. Wolfe soldered a pair of speakers and Lai sewed them into a stretchy headband. Their invention was a success and Lai began to share it with patients who struggled to sleep.

For the first five years, SleepPhones was a hobby that the pair pursued in addition to their day jobs. After selling out of their homemade stock in just a few months, they saw a potential full-time business opportunity. The couple began to hire employees to help manage demand.

Headquartered in Erie, Pennsylvania, SleepPhones is an example of how a small business can be truly global in the digital age from sales to partnerships to suppliers.

On the manufacturing side, SleepPhones maintains control over their end products with the help of 20 full-time and 5 part-time employees who support a global supply chain of components, plastics and packaging from Erie to Asia.

“We are trying to make the best product in the world, we are going to be sourcing from the best places in the world to find what we need,” Lai explained, though her company sources hyper-local whenever possible. “Plastic manufacturing is one of the largest industries in Erie, and we source package and printed material less than a mile down the road,” said Lai.

SleepPhones has shipped products to customers in over 80 countries worldwide with the UK, Canada and Australia leading the way. “It’s ridiculously easy to ship through the U.S. Postal Service,” suggested Lai. “Fifteen to 20 percent of what we sell goes abroad,” she added.

As the team professionalized its operations and manufacturing, it went from homemade headphones to a business with global dealer and supplier relationships.

In non-English speaking countries, distributors play a large role in helping to localize SleepPhones in specific markets around the world including Japan, Singapore, Germany and Belgium.

Lai explained that she authorizes distributors to tailor online marketing and Google AdWords campaigns to their region, boosting sales by trusting local expertise.
With customers, distributors and suppliers worldwide, an open global internet is essential for SleepPhones to succeed.

“The internet has been absolutely critical. It’s amazing the amount of connections we are able to make now compared to before internet. I can’t imagine not having it for doing what we’re doing,” stressed Lai.

Technology, said Lai, also allows SleepPhones to maintain contact with its partners and customers without relying on costly trips to each market.

Lai points to several challenges SleepPhones has faced taking their business global. Currency fluctuations following Brexit directly impacted SleepPhones exports, causing them to terminate a potentially high-profile entry into the UK market because the company “couldn’t make the numbers work anymore.”

Tariff and other trade barriers anywhere along her global supply and export chain also hurt, whether those tariffs are on products coming into or going out of the United States. “Even though we are doing a lot of value added in the United States, tariffs [on U.S. imports] can still hurt us,” said Lai.

Lai also noted the importance of protecting the integrity of her product and keeping close tabs on suppliers. “In global trade, we see knockoffs out there,” she said, “so we want to protect our intellectual property and make sure that our suppliers are honest.”

Trade agreements remain confusing for small businesses to comprehend fully, but Lai notes that certain provisions could be extremely helpful. In particular, she points to the importance of minimizing paperwork and not having to pay duties on packages under a certain value is tremendously valuable for a small business.

Connecting with the right people is a tremendous help in overcoming those initial hurdles, especially when you don’t have a business background, advised Lai.

Government websites and the Small Business Administration have provided significant support, shared Lai. “We’re fortunate here in Erie Pennsylvania to have a strong [Small Business Association] group and a whole network of business help communities, including an export assistance programs.” State funded programs can also provide great tools, such as market research and distributor information, for little to no cost.

Lai advises entrepreneurs to take on global markets, even if it is a bit more work upfront.

“Having that diversity in your footprint is only going to help you as a company, said Lai. “Instead of blaming globalization as you grow, you really have to embrace it, learn it, and leverage it. It could be a significant part of your business.”
"At Strider, we build bikes that teach kids to ride," explained founder Ryan McFarland, who built his first balance bike for his two-year-old son.

With a passion for motor sports and teaching young kids to ride, McFarland turned his creation into a business in 2007. His pedal-less strider bikes are designed to fit children between 2 and 5 years of age and to teach them the fundamentals of riding on two wheels. McFarland explained that the simple, focused approach of balancing before pedaling lets kids progress at a much faster pace, typically enabling them to ride a two-wheeler 2 years earlier than with tricycles and training wheels.

Strider Sports is headquartered in McFarland’s hometown of Rapid City, South Dakota. With distributors in 25 countries around the world and manufacturing based in Asia, the small business has an extensive international presence. International customers account for over 50 percent of Strider Sports annual sales.

"Without the internet, our business would not exist," said McFarland. He said that, were it not for the opportunity to reach the rest of the world through websites and social media channels, he would not have considered turning his hobby into an actual business. The internet allows the Rapid City based company to sell products, share documents, communicate with partners and customers, and receive payment from countries around the globe.

Social media, what McFarland calls "modern word-of-mouth," and mobile-friendly websites are imperative for the company’s marketing efforts. The company hired dedicated staff in their headquarters in South Dakota to work on outreach and content via online channels including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Flickr.

The company has used other technology-based tools to handle shipping and logistics, including platforms from FedEx and UPS. "These companies have some freight financing programs that can be helpful when moving large amounts of product by ocean carrier," said McFarland.
Counterfeit products are a big issue for Strider Sports in the global marketplace and have a significant impact on the company's growth and profitability.

“Even though our manufacturing is handled overseas, we are creating many great jobs in the USA – high paying sales, marketing, and innovation jobs,” noted McFarland, who explained that the profits from their global activities come back to their workforce and community in the United States. Strider sports has 32 full time employees in South Dakota and 10 overseas supporting their international operations.

McFarland advises entrepreneurs interested in going global to be prepared early on for the additional resources, expense and time that goes along with the journey.

He noted that regular communication and collaboration with teams overseas is crucial and easier these days, and points to tools such as Skype and Google’s suite of services as making it easier and cheaper to stay in touch with global suppliers, customers and partners.

Getting paid upfront for international orders is also important both to determine valuable partners and to decrease risk from currency fluctuations.

“The world is a big place and there is definitely business to be had in global markets,” said McFarland.

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA
POP. 67,956

In 2016, exports to FTA markets accounted for 71% of South Dakota
Based in Nashville, Tennessee, The Pasta Shoppe makes innovative, family-friendly pasta in an array of different shapes and colors for a global customer base.

Founded in 1994, the company has 40 employees at its headquarters and ships to countries on three continents. Its goal is to service the interest in outside-the-mainstream opportunities for foodies, delivering pasta that is kid-friendly and healthy, explained Founder and CEO John Aron.

“You can't make money making penne if you're a small company,” said Aaron. By creating high-end pasta in unique shapes that are fun and attractive for families, The Pasta Shoppe's unique product has found a niche on dinner tables throughout North America, South America and Asia.

“We run a technology business at the top,” observed Aaron, which helps guide “30,000 square feet of people who are converting 43,000 pounds of flour that comes in from North Dakota into different shapes during the day.”

The Pasta Shoppe differentiates itself by offering a massive amount of product offerings. While an average pasta-maker might have 6 to 12 SKUs (stock keeping units), The Pasta Shoppe has around 250, as the company creates a variety of shapes and styles for different occasions and seasons.

Overseas markets account for between 10 and 15 percent of pasta the company produces.

Aron said that the international component of his business contributes to The Pasta Shoppe's ability to build its domestic workforce.

One benefit of foreign markets for The Pasta Shoppe is to extend production capabilities for its seasonal products. “From a financial perspective, we’re making Halloween pasta in June and Christmas pasta in July [for overseas markets],” explained Aron, compared to the American market, for which the company produces most of its Halloween pasta in August and September.

“The greater distances traveled allow us to start certain seasons of our year earlier,” said Aron, and “those rolling production capabilities translate into rolling cash flows.”

Innovation is the key to global success.
“We’ve been on the web since 1995,” highlighted Aron, adding that, “nobody’s been on the web that long in the specialty food business.” Today, the company leverages its web presence as well as social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter to reach a global audience.

For The Pasta Shoppe, challenges are often country-specific. While distributors can act as a middleman, the support comes with a fee. “One of the reasons you have an agent in Japan is the division of the workload and their home court advantage,” said Aron, “If I didn’t have that middleman, we would both be more exposed to the harshness of the Japanese customs clearance.” In the case of The Pasta Shoppe, it was cheaper to have the agent handle the issues in the Japanese market and allow the team to focus on productivity.

At the same time, those difficult-to-penetrate markets like Japan can often smooth entry into others. “Japan is a linchpin knowledgebase for us,” shared Aron.

Globally, “with the dollar at a 14 year high, my margins are going to be squeezed, without a doubt,” observed Aron. “You can’t sell a 30 percent higher price for pasta to cover the currency failure, so you’re really tested in that environment.” He worries that, “when you see major currency changes, they’re typically not blips. They tend to be five year trends.” Even with those headwinds, his global business “still happens,” which he attributes to a secret sauce of a lean business model, innovation and long-term customer value.

U.S. government services can help small businesses target and connect with customers abroad. The Pasta Shoppe has benefited from the support of the Southern U.S. Trade Association (SUSTA) program, a partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which helps promote small food and agriculture businesses in foreign markets. Aron noted that the program can subsidize tradeshow and marketing costs for companies looking to go global. While the resources are helpful, Aron worries that government assistance can be slow-paced, and that more real-time advice would benefit small businesses as they take steps to cross new borders.

For entrepreneurs looking to grow their business into global markets, The Pasta Shoppe founder provides two pieces of advice: “Make sure your innovation is right and make sure you’re fully in control of your supply chain.”

Aron also suggested that partnerships with platforms like Amazon provide tremendous opportunity for small businesses. “The ability to partner with a company like Amazon can be a game changer,” said Aron.

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

POP. 601, 222

More than 158,000 U.S. jobs supported by goods exports from Tennessee in 2015
George, a dear friend of Dr. Christopher Jacobs, was a musician, businessman and also a severe Type II diabetic. George often spoke of the pain and loss of sensation in his fingertips and how it impacted his ability to play his instruments. He asked Jacobs if he could build a device that would eliminate the need to poke his fingers.

Jacobs invented a gentle lancing device to help his friend, which can obtain test blood from anywhere on the body with virtually no pain. The invention uses vacuum, vibration and depth control technologies to draw a drop of blood from a shallow test site, reaching only blood capillaries and avoiding pain nerves. It can even enable parents to check their children’s blood in the middle of the night without waking them.

“George loved it and asked me to make two or three for friends,” said Jacobs. Not long after, George turned to Jacobs, who was retired at the time, and urged him to continue making what he considered a revolutionary device that could benefit the millions of diabetics around the world who have to prick their fingers daily.

Jacobs established Genteel in 2014 in Midland, Texas, where the manufacturing operations are based, and Portland, Oregon, where he and his research team reside. Today the company has 11 full time employees between the two locations. The device is entirely manufactured in the United States.

Half of Genteel’s sales are overseas, with Europe, Russia and South Africa as major destinations. Jacobs attributes initial demand overseas to word-of-mouth, as customers who bought the device and fell in love with it and then act as local advocates. “We are now working on setting up distribution worldwide,” Jacobs said, with partners on nearly every continent.

Jacobs notes that improving the company’s website and translating its online presence into different languages has increased global sales. “You could be in Saudi Arabia, Dubai, or anywhere and just go to mygenteel.com,” he said, and buy directly. Genteel is also available on Amazon, which provides distribution support in several countries.

About 60 percent of the company’s overseas business is direct-to-consumer via their website or online e-commerce platforms with the other 40 percent via distribution partners.

“There is no country we don’t ship to,” said Jacobs, “unless we are blocked from doing business there.”

In order to keep up with the international growth, Jacobs said they have had to expand their domestic workforce both on the manufacturing side and also to handle marketing and regulatory needs.

Online tools, including the website, social media platforms and cloud-based software play a significant role in enabling Genteel
to operate a global small business. Jacobs keyed on the importance of the internet for distributing vital information to his customers.

"Instructional videos – what a gift to jump on a website and go to instructions and look at how to use our device," said Jacobs.

While printed instructions are included with each device, videos give customers a firsthand account of how the device works. YouTube is essential to allowing the company to share their informational videos as well as customer testimonials, spreading word-of-mouth worldwide.

One of the biggest challenges for Genteel was receiving regulatory approval from key bodies including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and European Economic Area (CE). The founders spent half of all capital invested on lawyers, processors and filing fees associated with the approvals, which also involved review of instruction manuals and manufacturing processes in addition to the products themselves.

Jacobs credits the Portland U.S. Export Assistance Center (USEAC) as providing key advice on his international journey. “USEAC were absolutely awesome,” said Jacobs, “I just can’t speak highly enough.” The Gold Key Program, he said, was especially helpful in setting up meetings and gathering resources from around the globe in one place. He suggested that the program saved the company money and helped connect with the right resources to help the business grow and succeed abroad. USEAC staff also help to navigate regulatory requirements in other countries.

Jacobs’s advice to entrepreneurs is to, “do it right at every step.” Don’t go out and sell something that should have FDA clearance if you don’t have the clearance, he explained.
Salt Lake City-based technology innovator inWhatLanguage helps its customers be global but sound local.

“In this ever shrinking world, the need to manage content globally is increasingly important,” said Cody Broderick, CEO of inWhatLanguage.

The company translates, manages and distributes content for companies from Apple to Johnson & Johnson and individuals worldwide via a global network of linguists supported by software and AI. Their flagship product is UNIFY, a cloud-based translation management solution that allows companies to collaborate across decentralized teams to translate and manage foreign-language content seamlessly.

Founded in 2011, the company has a truly global footprint that spans customers, employees and translators around the world.

“Our global footprint is felt via the people that we hire,” explained Broderick.

With translators and project managers in 130 different countries, its geographic reach exceeds that of many large corporations.

Overseas markets are an important and growing component of inWhatLanguage’s business. Right now, roughly 15 percent of its revenue is from overseas markets, but “there is a crazy amount of potential, so we will be looking at deploying more of a global sales force,” said Broderick.

He added that, “50 percent of the world is online right now and more than 90 percent of consumers live outside of the United States, so what we do is in-demand and that demand will continue to grow.”

Broderick’s ability to export its services internationally and assemble a unique global workforce is part of the company’s secret sauce that enables inWhatLanguage to maintain 30 full time employees in Salt Lake City and 2 in Dublin, Ireland.

In order for linguists and customers to connect with one another and utilize inWhatLanguage services, it is essential to have a globally-accessible internet.

“We are cloud based,” said Broderick, adding that, “our technology is not a software that is downloaded onto your machine, so it only works where the internet is available.”
While the company serves as a cloud platform to support other internationally engaged companies, inWhatLanguage also relies on a suite of technology platforms to streamline its business and allow it to engage effectively overseas. Broderick cites the cloud-based version of QuickBooks, which allows his team to automate connections to their Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to streamline the finance side of the business. For marketing support, inWhatLanguage utilizes Pardot, a Salesforce marketing platform, which integrates well with the company’s other cloud-based systems. LinkedIn also allows the company to narrow and target individuals and industries that might be interested in their services.

Broderick ticked off an array of challenges he and his team have faced going global from tax considerations to complying with local labor laws to finding trusted banking and payment partners. Those issues did not pose an insurmountable hurdle for their business, and he suggested it was important for the company to understand the implications of doing business in a specific market and comply with the different rules to succeed. He suggested that expanding connectivity and access to developing countries in Africa and elsewhere would be good for development and for business.

inWhatLanguage has benefitted from an array of government and private sector programs to help make sense of global markets, including the Governor’s Office of Economic Development, Economic Development Cooperation of Utah, World Trade Center Utah and the U.S. Commercial Service. Broderick explained how the US Commercial Services Gold Key program provides support when entering a new market by doing “a deep dive on your goals, objectives, needs and then they start lining up great people to make immediate impact and immediate progress.”

He noted that the advice is often free or at low cost and that these advisors “want to help businesses think, act and succeed globally.”

More broadly, Broderick noted that, “trade agreements are complex, but if there is any way we can foster trade and simplify it on both sides of the fence, it’s going to have an impact.” The positive economic impact of closer trading relationships may start with companies like inWhatLanguage, he said, but ultimately carries downstream to individuals, families and communities.

For entrepreneurs looking to venture into foreign markets, Broderick stresses the importance of not being afraid to ask questions. He suggested that tapping experts from the beginning can help entrepreneurs succeed quicker in global markets, saying, “don’t waste any time – get in there.”
PROTECT YOUR PUMPS
FASHION | 3 EMPLOYEES | FOUNDED IN 2011

While working at Neiman Marcus, Kathryn Jackson saw a void in the market for a product to protect women’s expensive shoes. Jackson explained that she founded Protect Your Pumps “to be the premier shoe care company for those who invest in nice shoes and want to keep them looking nice.”

Founded in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 2011, Protect Your Pumps helps women and men keep their shoes from getting scuffed and reduces the effects of general wear and tear. Jackson relies on two part-time employees and several suppliers and fulfillment centers around the United States to run her business.

“Our international market is big,” said Jackson, estimating that overseas buyers make up 30 percent of overall sales. Jackson highlights the EU – especially the UK – and Australia as her largest markets and proudly notes that she has shipped Protect Your Pumps to over 80 countries.

“I attribute our international success to the power of the web and social media,” said Jackson.

Once the company was up and running on Instagram, orders unexpectedly arrived from all over the world.

Jackson explained that, “Our product is a visual product. People want to see what it is and what it does and Instagram was instrumental for that.”

Protect Your Pumps offers three payment gateways: Stripe, PayPal and Amazon Pay. “Having that variety of payment gateways has been good for consumers. Not everyone wants to put their credit card in. I get that,” said Jackson.

She also uses a variety of apps and software including Evernote, Dropbox for file sharing, Trello as a task manager and email marketing software, to power her global small business.
Jackson noted customs and shipping as the biggest pain points for Protect Your Pumps internationally. “Getting your packages overseas can be a major headache,” said Jackson, adding that they can occasionally get lost in transit or end up generating customs duties for customers that can cost more than the goods themselves.

She advises governments that small businesses like hers would benefit from improved access to information and a better understanding of the resources available to help them succeed globally.

Reducing barriers to new international markets would also improve the Protect Your Pumps journey. Jackson suggested that, “some of the tariffs are too high and discourage trade.”

Jackson said that international sales “just kind of happened for me,” and advised other small businesses that, “if you have a good product, continue to share and the world will follow.”

More broadly, Jackson observed that, “I didn’t have a lot of money but I had an idea and a lot of enthusiasm so I got started. My website looked horrible, but the business was up and running.” She took away from that experience that, “you don’t need Uber’s budget. Just start where you’re at and grow into your success. You’re not going to know everything in year one, but the journey is the cool part about it.”

I ATTRIBUTE OUR INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS TO THE POWER OF THE WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA.
INTERNET PLATFORMS & TECHNOLOGIES

Each of the small businesses surveyed relies extensively on online technologies to access the global marketplace. These business leaders highlighted a variety of internet-enabled tools from e-commerce platforms and payments services to social media, cloud services and productivity software as essential to facilitating their effective participation in the global marketplace.

Marketing, outreach and visibility

Social media platforms and web-based marketing tools provide insights into foreign markets and the ability for small businesses to access customers around the world.

Nearly every company – regardless of size or industry – has a social media presence. Schmucke of Oxbow Animal Health noted that tools such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Pinterest are all key in supporting the brands’ in-depth social media strategy.

Sharing product information on the web reaches more audiences and is much more cost effective than attending trade shows. “If people ask how you use our product or how Bright View manufactures, you can go on our website and link to YouTube videos,” explained Aspell of Brightview Technologies.

McFarland of Strider Sports International urges distributors to pursue a variety of online channels including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Flickr initially when entering a new market.

Companies also pointed the value of targeted online ad campaigns to increase their visibility globally. SleepPhones can manage its global marketing operations from headquarters in Erie, Pennsylvania, thanks to online platforms such as Google AdWords. Lai adds that her team empowers local distributors to tailor marketing campaigns on AdWords and other services in their region for more effective results.

Online sales tools and e-commerce platforms

Backend sales platforms such as Bigcommerce and Shopify – and cloud services like Amazon Web Services and Google Cloud Platform -- empower small businesses to open online stores directly from their own website. E-commerce platforms such as Amazon, eBay and Etsy – and overseas counterparts such as Alibaba, Flipkart, and MercadoLibre – provide alternative distribution channels and often add value through the use of reviews, trust tools and advice. These services enable small businesses in the United States to build a global presence without needing to build their own global IT infrastructure. By leveraging user reviews, search engines, and other features of online services, U.S. companies can quickly spread awareness and positive word of mouth to new customers around the world.

Aron of the Pasta Shoppe noted that small businesses can use Amazon, Jet and other e-commerce platforms to press a button to take “U.S. based-inventory and lever it into Canada and Mexico” and other countries. He added, “if I’ve got a cool widget that is fundamental to families, I have an opportunity to sell in a customer-facing way with a partner like Amazon.” He notes that, even with the fees, companies are “paying less to middlemen.”

E-Commerce platforms, Aron said, are a game-changer for global business” that allows U.S. companies to sell individual units internationally at a high-margin as opposed to via distribution partners at close to cost.

“We really encourage companies to take advantage of e-commerce platforms who are out there -- Amazon, eBay, Alibaba, etcetera,” said Teren Taniuchi, Director of International Trade Services at the World Trade Center Utah in an interview.

“We make it a point to reach out to companies in Utah who are farther away from the Wasatch Front, who are often small retailers, and talk with them about how using an ecommerce platform can be a great way to test particular foreign markets. You can then continue to use that platform or set up a distribution line directly into the country.”

Data supports these anecdotes. While only about 1 percent of all American small businesses export, eBay reports that 98% of its U.S.-based commercial sellers do so. Small businesses that use an e-commerce platform are five times more likely to export than those that do not.

Shipping and logistics services

These small businesses suggest that logistics companies can help address one of their biggest pain points – international shipping. From preparing customs documents to tracking shipments, logistics companies can facilitate the transfer of physical goods worldwide.

Thanks to help from FedEx, UPS and DHL, the Pennsylvania-based SleepPhones team has “shipped to over 80 countries, including Antarctica,” noted their founder. Vohs of Lil’ Sidekick added that FedEx and DHL file paperwork electronically for her small
business, simplifying shipping procedures.

More broadly, the USITC notes, “Falling costs and the increasing ease of transporting products to most locations around the world is an important factor spurring SME exports.”

**Payments**

Many of the businesses interviewed for this report indicated they used one or more online payments services to facilitate foreign transactions. Companies including Deering Banjo, Lil Sidekick, SleepPhones and Strider Sports mentioned using tools such as PayPal, Square and Stripe to ease e-commerce transactions with customers around the world.

Jackson of Protect Your Pumps explains the importance of offering multiple payment gateways like PayPal and Amazon Pay. “Having that variety of payment gateways has been good for consumers.”

More broadly, businesses find that utilizing platforms like PayPal and Stripe enable the secure transfer of funds from one country to another and encourage international sales. PayPal notes that over 65% of its U.S.-based “top merchants” conduct transactions across borders.

**Productivity tools**

Web-based tools enable U.S. small businesses to export to foreign markets in less obvious ways as well. Simplifying processes and communication helps small teams do big things.

Online tools that offer a centralized database with real-time information play a significant role in enabling Genteel to operate a global business from Midland, Texas and Portland, Oregon. “What’s nice about [Google] Drive is that we can simultaneously have people in all the different offices or sales presentations and they can make changes simultaneously,” noted CEO Jacobs, who added that cloud-based software also allows customer service agents to track shipping status and customer service tickets.

Lai of SleepPhones added the importance she places on having, “the ability to have virtual face-to-face meetings with partners abroad via Skype or share documents using Quip or simply chat with people using Google Hangouts.” She keys on these tools as essential for her company’s day-to-day business.

Schmuecker of Oxbow Animal Health sounded a similar theme, stressing the importance of tools such as GoToMeeting and Skype as especially beneficial in providing platforms to communicate. “WeChat and Whatsapp are especially important in the Asia Pacific,” Schmuecker added.

It’s not just technology or consumer-facing businesses who benefit from the internet. As McKinsey noted, more than three-quarters of the value of the internet accrues to traditional industries in manufacturing, agriculture, and other sectors.

KaMin CEO Hobbes remarked that, “an open global internet is essential to conducting our export business efficiently” and described the important role that internet-enabled systems play in connecting his staff, logistics partners, and customers around the world.

**The value of global connectivity**

Taken together, these technologies add up to essential tools for small businesses.

“The internet has been absolutely critical,” exclaimed Dr. Wei-Shin Lai of SleepPhones. “It’s amazing the amount of stuff we are able to do now” compared to before it existed. While she is not old enough to know what life was like without internet entirely, she recalls its transformation over the years and its importance in their business today.

In order for linguists and customers to connect with one another and utilize inWhatLanguage services, it is essential to have a globally-accessible internet. “We are cloud based,” said Broderick, adding that, “our technology is not a software that is downloaded onto your machine, so it only works where the internet is available.”

For small businesses to reach customers in international markets, access to the internet is vital. Without access to the internet, customers cannot purchase goods and services or even learn more what they are offering.

As Zalewski of LoveBooks noted, “if the internet didn’t exist, I don’t think we would.” The customized book company, like many businesses today, relies on the internet for nearly every aspect of their operations: to reach customers, to allow customers to build their book, to share data with printers, and to communicate internally.

"WE REALLY ENCOURAGE COMPANIES TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS WHO ARE OUT THERE – AMAZON, EBAY, ALIBABA, ETCETERA." - TEREN TANIUCHI, DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE SERVICES, WORLD TRADE CENTER UTAH
TAKEAWAYS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The feedback from business leaders in this report suggest several takeaways and recommendations for U.S. policymakers:

**Takeaway 1.** American small businesses and startups are exporting thanks to the internet. Small businesses that utilize internet platforms and services are more likely to participate effectively in global markets. In markets where these services are not fully available, U.S. small business exports are harmed.

The American small businesses surveyed in this report all help explain how the internet is democratizing access for U.S. companies to the global marketplace. Over the last two decades, the internet has significantly increased the capacity of U.S. companies in manufacturing, mining, agriculture, and other traditional industries to reach new customers abroad.

Founded in 1926, kaolin clay mining company KaMin uses a web-based platform to execute its global business, which supports internal planning, manufacturing, and order cash processes. Deering Banjo relies heavily on social media outlets to spotlight unsolicited endorsements by existing customers, while using cloud-based productivity tools to manage their increasingly global business and relying on an online presence in other countries to reach customers in abroad. Oxbow Animal Health monitors online feedback from their global network in response to new products and promotions.

Their experiences mirror findings of the Boston Consulting Group, which estimates that small businesses that are “heavy web users” are about 50 percent more likely to sell products and services globally than those businesses who use the web less-intensively.

Startups, which use technology intensively, tend to be naturally global. McKinsey and the DC-based 1776 incubator found that two-thirds of the startups they surveyed have customers in other countries and 86 percent had some global component to their business. Overall, “one-third of SMEs reported that they sell and deliver products and services online, while 46 percent sell products and services online that are delivered physically – nearly the same percentage as large U.S. firms,” according to the USITC.
Recommendation 1: Prioritize efforts to support an open global digital economy and eliminate digital trade barriers to ensure that American small businesses can reach consumers abroad. Where consumers and businesses abroad lack payment options, are unable to track packages, lack access to social media or other widely-used web platforms due to regulatory barriers, or cannot access the internet reliably, they are unable to engage with American businesses.

Takeaway 2. Internet-enabled exports are strengthening American small businesses locally and supporting American jobs.

Executives interviewed for this report echoed a common refrain: Global markets are important to their local success and ability to create jobs in the United States.

Jenny Doan, founder of Missouri Star Quilt, noted that access to international markets helps support her 450 employees in Missouri, 85 percent of whom are women. This local growth is driven by, “big customer bases who have been bit by the quilting bug in the UK, Germany, and elsewhere in Europe, Australia and New Zealand.”

Mehdi Yazdanpanah, the founder of Kentucky-based NaugaNeedles, highlighted that, “more than 50 percent of our revenue comes from exports” of his American-made invention and that he counts customers in over 25 countries around the world.

Adam Deyhim, founder and CEO of New York-based Advanced Design Consulting, emphasized that contracts with clients outside of the United States have allowed his company to ride the waves of the domestic economy and stay in business.

These American companies also benefit from the ability to connect with partners, workers and providers from around the world.

For example, Utah-based inWhatLanguage utilizes a global network of skilled linguists to power its unique cloud-based translation business and employ 30 people in the United States. Pennsylvania-based SleepPhones sources magnets from Asia to construct its wireless headphones to support its 20-plus-person American workforce.

Studies suggest that small businesses who export tend to experience higher growth, are more positive about future business prospects, plan more capital investments, and are more likely to be “high performers.”9 Globally-engaged small businesses also tend to employ more staff and grow faster on average than non-exporters.10

More broadly, according to one estimate, trade supports 41 million jobs in the United States.11

Recommendation 2: Empower American small businesses to compete and succeed in the global marketplace and take steps to make their journeys easier.

Takeaway 3. America’s small business face a range of challenges around the world, but remain optimistic about the opportunity to succeed globally.

Several challenges stand out:

1. Difficulties around complying with foreign regulations: Deyhim of Advanced Design Consulting expressed frustration with local distributor requirements and seemingly redundant approval process. Others cited challenges complying with industry specific regulations, such as regulatory approval for medical devices.

2. Shipping, customs and tariffs: Companies from Protect Your Pumps to Deering Banjo to Brightview Technologies face added challenges, tariffs and other costs when shipping their goods across borders. LoveBook highlighted the challenge of completing paperwork around customs procedures, while several companies fretted about orders that get stuck in customs where there is little visibility as to what is happening.

3. Strong U.S. Dollar: Several executives raised the impact of a strong U.S. dollar on their ability to export at an attractive cost. The decline in value of the British pound following Brexit caused SleepPhones to miss a major opportunity to enter the UK marketplace. Aaron of The Pasta Shoppe added, “With the dollar at a 14-year high, my margins are going to be squeezed.”

4. Ensuring innovations are protected overseas: Aspell of Bright View Technologies emphasized the importance of taking measures to protect a company’s innovative assets around the world. Lai of SleepPhones advised partnering with trusted suppliers and keeping tabs on your product through the supply chain.

5. Lack of access to internet services: Most companies highlighted their reliance on internet platforms and social media services to reach new markets abroad, and noted that they would be disadvantaged by prohibitions or limitations on access to these services in other countries.

Despite these challenges, these business leaders advised small businesses to look outside of the United States for new growth opportunities, where 95 percent of world consumers and 75 percent of the world’s purchasing power reside.12

McFarland of Strider International noted that, “the world is a big
place and there is definitely business to be had in global markets.” Deyhim of New York’s Advanced Design Consulting urges fellow entrepreneurs to “not even question whether or not to go global.” Outside of the United States, businesses can find “unlimited markets that are easily connected thanks to the internet,” he said. “While you might be struggling in the U.S. market, you could go overseas and grow tremendously.”

“Instead of blaming globalization as you grow, you really have to embrace it and leverage it and use as much of it as you can,” counseled Lai of SleepPhones.

That said, these entrepreneurs advise companies to know their markets and understand the value of early compliance with foreign regulations. Jacobs of Genteel tells entrepreneurs to, “do it right at every step” and avoid cutting corners with required regulatory approvals.

**Recommendation 3:** Recognize small business owners and founders as core trade stakeholders, seek to increase their input and participation in advisory committees, informal consultations and hearings, and develop new strategies to address the global challenges they face.

**Takeaway 4.** Small businesses can benefit from Federal and State global promotion programs, though some are not aware they exist.

Several business leaders pointed to the importance of Federal or State programs that contributed directly to their success in international markets.

Companies including Genteel and KaMin credited the U.S. Commerce Department’s Commercial Service as providing key advice and resources. The Department’s network of U.S. Export Assistance Centers (USEAC) around the United States provides Gold Key services, facilitates introductions to agents, distributors and officials, and may defray costs of travel for trade shows. Other companies pointed to the Ex-Im Bank and programs from organizations including the U.S. Small Business Administration, National Science Foundation and Small Business Innovative Research (SBIR) as important to their global success.

Several others mentioned the role of state and local programs to their success. For example, in WhatLanguage has worked with the Utah Governor’s Office of Economic Development, Economic Development Cooperation of Utah and the Local World Trade Center in Salt Lake City. Vohs of Lil’ Sidekick worked with the Iowa Economic Development Center, which “played a huge role in our success.” KaMin has developed relationships with their Governor’s office.

Others had advice for how to improve content and outreach.

Jacobs of Genteel suggested that, for businesses just starting out, it would be better if government programs provided more guidance through the nitty-gritty of exporting, including customs requirements associated with foreign shipments.

The LoveBook team added that the company has not taken advantage of any government services as of yet, but expressed interest in learning more about what is available. “It would be nice to know what exists and I don’t know how to find that,” said Zalewski adding that, “The communication to the small businesses is broken a bit.”

**Recommendation 4:** Expand Federal and State export promotion efforts and increase outreach to startups and small businesses, including by growing innovative public-private partnerships. For example, the Global Innovation Forum and U.S. Department of Commerce have seen significant interest among small businesses in Startup Global, a public-private partnership to help startups across the United States think globally from Day One and to improve understanding of public and private sector resources that enable success.

**Takeaway 5.** American small businesses favor more open trade.

Over the last two decades, small businesses have leveraged the internet to become exporters and, in the process, have become invested in global trade debates. These business leaders expressed strong views about the importance of maintaining and improving access to open markets overseas, and concern about the prospect of new taxes or tariffs that would make it harder for them to compete abroad.

“I’m a free trade guy,” said Patterson of LoveBook. “If I had my preference, I would like to deal with companies directly without any tariffs.” Different countries, he said, have particular strengths, and businesses should have the ability to pick and choose their partners without restrictions.

“I think breaking down barriers through trade agreements is a good thing,” said Jacobs of Genteel in Portland, Oregon. He added that, “from my personal experience, it doesn’t take jobs away; it actually makes jobs possible.”

Trade agreements “are complex, but if there is any way we can foster
trade and simplify it on both sides of the fence, it’s going to have an impact,” explained Broderick of inWhatLanguage. The positive economic impact may start with companies like his, he said, but carry downstream to individuals, families and communities.

“The world is going global and there is no going back,” advised Lai of SleepPhones. She concluded, “you have to make sure that you are negotiating well and that you’ve got what you need on the table to ensure you are benefiting your own country – but not being at the table may be a mistake.”

Recommendation 5: Maintain the commitment of the United States to open markets abroad; seek new pathways to improve access to international markets, including by ensuring that small businesses can use internet services to reach foreign consumers; and create shared rules of the road to promote rule-of-law, transparency, and fair and nondiscriminatory treatment of American businesses and workers.

“THE WORLD IS GOING GLOBAL AND THERE IS NO GOING BACK. YOU HAVE TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE NEGOTIATING WELL AND THAT YOU’VE GOT WHAT YOU NEED ON THE TABLE TO ENSURE YOU ARE BENEFITING YOUR OWN COUNTRY – BUT NOT BEING AT THE TABLE MAY BE A MISTAKE.”

- DR. WEI-SHIN LAI, SLEEPPHOONES
State-by-state trade statistics in the report were sourced from the International Trade Administration's "Exports, Jobs, and Foreign Investment" state reports: http://www.trade.gov/mas/ian/statereports/index.asp.


“IN TERMS OF OUR CUSTOMER BASE, INTERNATIONAL MARKETS ARE VERY IMPORTANT FOR US.”

- JENNY DOAN, MISSOURI STAR QUILT
THE NEW FACES OF AMERICAN TRADE

Global Innovation Forum @ NFTC
1625 K Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20006

www.globalinnovationforum.com
CONNECTING GLOBALLY-MINDED, POLICY-AWARE ENTREPRENEURS, INNOVATORS AND OFFICIALS

@GlobaliForum