

Maine International Trade Day 2011 Celebrates Export Growth

Speakers and expert panel give practical advice on doing business internationally; event honors achievement and offers important networking opportunities

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Janine Bisailon-Cary, president of the Maine International Trade Center, opened the 31st annual Maine International Trade Day with encouraging statistics: Maine experienced a 41% growth in international trade in 2010, the second highest rate in the nation. Of Maine's \$3.15 billion in export sales, \$332 million were with China; sales to Brazil were up 85%, and South African exports went up nine-fold in one year.

Bisailon-Cary also reported that container services out of Portland harbor, connecting with Halifax and Boston, would begin this week, and that 24/7 customs and oversized freight options were being offered out of Bangor International Airport. "Options like these make or break whether Maine will be a global player," Bisailon-Cary said at Trade Day's opening session. "We can't do trade if we're not competitive, and these initiatives are a huge part of that."

Web and social media expert Rich Brooks of flyte media followed Bisailon-Cary's opening remarks with "tools, technologies, and tactics that Maine businesses can use to expand globally." Brooks, an expert blogger for fastcompany.com and a popular speaker, told the story of how Brendan Ready of Ready Seafood followed an overseas inquiry from a potential wholesale purchaser of lobster with a tailor-made tour of the company's Portland facilities—made with a Flip video camera and emailed only minutes after the initial inquiry was made.

Brooks also spoke about the power of business blogs, and the potential to repurpose each keyword-filled blog across social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and others. In talking about the conferencing software Skype, Brooks noted: "Free video conferencing that can be used by anybody in the world who has the same software as you? George Jetson didn't have it as good as we do." He also noted that privacy weaknesses can make other paid options more desirable. Services such as Yammer, Base Camp, Salesforce.com and Google docs were among the many collaborative tools Brooks mentioned to aid companies in doing business internationally.

During a 9:00 am panel discussion moderated by Helen Lesiure of RBS Citizens, representatives from four Maine businesses pursuing sales internationally gave overviews of their companies and answered questions about specific approaches and challenges. Garrett VanAtta of SPX

Communication Technology spoke of his company's work in emerging markets such the telecom markets in rural India and Nigeria. VanAtta gave insights on creating a trusted local source to "keep things moving" rather than trying to manage everything from the U.S., and keeping aware of how business is done in each country, from road conditions to understanding what kind of pricing each market can bear. He gave the example of cell phone coverage. "In the U. S., we pay about \$50 per month for cell phone serve; in India, it's \$5, \$3 in rural areas."

Jean Chiotti from IDEXX Laboratories, headquartered in Westbrook, was also a panelist. Regarding whether or not a U.S. product will be accepted in a particular market, he said, "The first thing to do is to leave all your assumptions behind and go in with an open mind. You can't assume that because it worked in Mexico, it will work in Brazil. With regulations, if you assume, 'if it's good enough for the USDA, shouldn't it be good enough for your Ministry of Agriculture?' the answer is, 'no.' You have to go in with a very, very open mind and a humble attitude."

To find product distributors, Chiotti also recommended working through the foreign commercial officer of the country where you wish to do business and to purchase "gold key services, or platinum key services. For a small fee, you'll get appointments with the top five to 10 top candidates." Attending a trade missions through the Maine International Trade Center, VanAtta noted, is also another valuable resource; a trip to Turkey helped SPX to find a professional to represent them in the Mid East.

Carol Deeney, from Stonewall Kitchen, talked about the specialty food company's international sales efforts in Canada and Europe. She spoke of some of the cultural factors that don't translate across international borders. For instance, the term "all natural" means different things in different places. In the United Arab Emirates, no alcohol can be among the ingredients, and the word "pork" cannot be mentioned, even in a recipe. Relationships, she said, are important in helping troubleshoot situations that might occur. For example, "customs people might decide to hold up something with honey in it, and suddenly you might have a need for health certificates, have to hold up shipments, and look at paying storage fees," Deeney said. Other factors, such as tariffs, have to be looked at carefully. "Tariffs for ketchup are 8% in Korea; in Japan, they're 25%."

Paul Delva, of Fairchild Semiconductor, relayed the importance of international markets to his company. Fairchild's focus is on mobile devices, and the growth is largely in Asia. "Seventy percent of our business is in Asia, half of that in China," he said, "Fifteen percent is in the U.S. and 15% in Europe." During 2008 and 2009, when the global semiconductor market shrunk 9%, Asia's market shrunk by only 5%. "For us, the Asian market softened the blow."

Delva, along with the other panelists, spoke about the importance of understanding and complying with the U. S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which governs how businesses may or may not deal with government officials. Training, Delva said, is key, both for employees and for any associates a company chooses to do business with.

The afternoon session of Maine Trade Day 2011 included an awards luncheon, featuring a keynote address by Allan Sloan, Senior Editor at Large for *Fortune* magazine and PBS contributor. The 2011 International Trade and Investment Award winners were:

• **Exporter of the Year: Cozy Harbor Seafood**

Cozy Harbor Seafood is 30-year-old company located in Portland, Maine and founded by its president John Norton. The company is a primary processor of local seafood offering products including lobster, shrimp, and ground fish, fresh and frozen.

• **International Service Provider of the Year: CIEE: Council on International Educational Exchange**

CIEE is a non-profit, non-governmental organization providing outbound international education experiences for university students, faculty, and administrators, and study, work, and internship opportunities for people coming into the U.S.

• **International Innovator of the Year: Artel**

Based in Westbrook, Artel is the global technology leader in ultra-low volume liquid handling measurement and quality assurance. Artel technology has become critical to data integrity in leading biopharm, clinical, forensic, research, and other life sciences labs worldwide.

• **International Investor of the Year: Sappi Fine Paper North America**

Sappi Fine Paper North America is a subsidiary of Sappi Limited, the pre-eminent producer and supplier of coated fine paper, pulp, and release paper in the U.S. This international corporation based in South Africa has manufacturing operations in 9 countries, including high-performing facilities in Skowhegan and Westbrook.

For more information on the Maine International Trade Center, visit www.mitc.com.