

Finding and Selecting the Right Distributor

<http://www.exportsolutions.com/distributorDirectory.aspx>

Hiring the right local partner is the third most important step in optimizing your sales. This follows creating a product with a unique consumer value proposition and willingness to invest in brand development activities. Listed below are some practical tips on selecting the right company to represent your brand.

Identify a Pool of Preliminary Candidates

Create a large group of potential candidates. This could include distributors, importers, brokers, or local producers of related products. Highlight companies that are specialists in market sector that you are aiming at. Export Solution streamlines this process with our online directory of more than 5,300 distributors, importers and brokers for 93 countries.

Establish Partner Selection Criteria

What are the key attributes of your ideal candidate?

Product specialization? Service portfolio? Existing results for current brands?

Choosing a Large, "Best in Class" partner versus a "Small, Hungry" company willing to pioneer a new brand is an important preference.

Determine Candidates Preliminary Interest Level

Send a brief summary of your product proposition and company credentials to the 5- 10 most promising candidates. A follow-up phone call to your top candidates is an appropriate personal connection.

Distributors expressing an interest should complete a brief company overview recapping their corporate capabilities: Sales, Logistics, Marketing etc.

Schedule a Meeting in the Candidates Office

Normally, we recommend interviewing at least three candidates depending on the size and scope of a project. Schedule the meeting 3-5 weeks in advance. Provide a specific agenda at least 2 weeks in advance, including pre-work such as category market analysis. Meet the distributor's team that would work on your business, as well as senior management. A distributor's office provides clues on company culture, scale, and capabilities.

Prepare Interview Questions and Assessment Grid in Advance

Create a list of key questions to ask each candidate. Topics could include local category dynamics, cost of entry, and Distributor success stories. Create a standard grid to evaluate and compare all candidates on a common platform. See page 4 for a sample distributor assessment grid.

Conduct an Independent Evaluation of Candidates Performance for Existing Brands

Visit target outlets for your product to observe category conditions. At the same time, evaluate each candidate's performance for his existing clients. Do his current brands maintain a strong presence in the market? Or are his brands hard to find? Conduct these visits to leading retailers independently, as an accompanied visit may lead you to select stores which may not be representative of marketplace reality.

Reference Checks Represent an Important Next Step

Request references of 5 of the distributors top 10 clients. Call at least three references and request insights into performance and capabilities. Acknowledge that these are likely to be positive references, but they always provide significant value. Run a Dun & Bradstreet or other type of credit report on leading candidates. Export Solutions is often hired to conduct independent, confidential, reference checks.

Invite Top Choice to your Corporate Headquarters

The visit should include meetings with senior management, factory visit; launch planning, and mutual commitment. The visit serves as an important bonding and relationship building experience between your company and your new partner.

[Distributor Assessment Questions](#)

[Distributor Assessment Scorecard](#)

[Email Distributors Response Form](#)

[Export Distributor DataSheet](#)