

## ***Client: TQS Food Consulting***

***The brief for this project was to create an outline of the client's business to accompany a competition entry. We were limited to 800 words, and they needed the text to cover specified areas of the client's objectives for the business.***

### **Outline of Business Strategy and Objectives**

When Andrew Skinner founded TQS 15 years ago, he had some plans to work with suppliers in Europe, but he had no idea what the potential could be.

After working with French and Italian companies, he was offered an opportunity to help a client introduce a range of Jamie Oliver branded products into China. It was one trip per year, but it began to show Andrew what might be possible in the Far East.

An introduction to a German company led to TQS helping them assure that their products met the standards of the British supermarket chains they wanted to supply. They now sell into Tesco, Asda, M&S and Spar amongst others. This business has been worth £220k over the past two years and is ongoing.

This led to a further introduction to a Finnish firm, performing the same service. To date, the client's investment in TQS of around £140k has resulted in sales in excess of £3.5million into the UK market.

TQS played a pivotal role in helping these clients to gain, and maintain business with UK supermarket chains. Operating profit has increased from £40k to over £200k in five years with the help of this overseas trade, which now accounts for approximately 60% of TQS's turnover.

Andrew realised this valuable service could be offered across the world. He began to actively look for other opportunities, and for ways to capitalise on the potential offered by China. To support this, in 2014, he enrolled on the Department of Trade and Industry's 'Passport to Export' programme, which has reaped huge rewards.

The programme helped him identify where further markets existed. This clarity led to a business strategy involving controlled growth of export opportunities, aiming to double turnover to £1M over two years.

### **Research into Target Overseas Markets**

Through the programme, Andrew secured funding to attend the Hong Kong Trade Development Council Food Expo 2015. This introduced him to the British Consulate, who provided him with key connections, particularly to the burgeoning Hospitality trade in Macau. He is returning this August to further those opportunities.

The trip provided confirmation of potential growth areas in the region.

The 'Passport to Export' course also identified Ireland and Italy as potential key markets, and more investigation of these is under way.

## **Distribution Channels and Route to Market**

TQS deal direct with clients, and as a knowledge-based service do not have any issues with distribution channels.

Routes to market are largely through introduction and recommendation. TQS are among a select group of credible technologists with established reputations throughout the industry. The power of introductions, personal connections and recommendations will be fully engaged.

Attending further Expos or conferences is also planned, to extend the company's reach

## **Relevant Branding and Marketing**

In preparation for this business growth push, Andrew engaged with a top UK business mentor to hone his team's sales and marketing skills. As a result of this investment he is able to draw upon a plethora of marketing tactics to approach potential new clients. These will prove invaluable in face-to-face or online meetings.

## **Barriers and Obstacles**

To date there are few barriers to business abroad. Andrew's travel experience had already given him an excellent understanding of how business is handled in different countries, and attending the 'Passport to Export' programme reinforced his awareness of the particular cultural differences that can cause problems.

Business is conducted in English under most circumstances, but he has always found that learning a few words of the client's language is appreciated.

TQS has ensured that all contracts are written and conducted under English law, and that all pricing and invoicing is carried out in sterling to avoid exchange rate difficulties.

The team at TQS have acknowledged that successful growth may lead to work 'overload' which could result in a lack of focus on the direction and purpose of the company. Regular development and review meetings will prevent this, and ensure that other challenges are identified and countered quickly.

## **Impact on UK Operations**

The existing export business has necessitated the recruitment of two staff members in two years. TQS anticipate projected growth will lead to a further two posts being created over the next two years.

Andrew and the team have been able to continue serving their UK clients throughout this period of growth, although they acknowledge that at times it has been 'blood, sweat and tears' that have seen them through.

Each phase of the company's growth has thrown up challenges, but they have risen to them, and overcome difficulties with good teamwork, excellent planning and clear strategy.

Everyone at TQS is looking forward to the future and they are committed to the growth and success of the company in the coming years, and to maintaining the good service and reputation that TQS deserves.