



Finding new markets for used books

Fast facts

Company: World of Books Wholesale

Industry: Creative Industries

Target Market: China

UKTI Services: Tradeshow Access
Programme, Overseas Market
Introduction Service

www.usedwholesalebooks.co.uk



UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) helped World of Books Wholesale fund its attendance at the Beijing International Book Fair and set up meetings with potential new customers. The company now expects to secure £100,000 worth of new business from contacts it met at the trade show.

There are around 9,000 charity shops in the UK, selling second hand goods ranging from clothes to games, furniture to books. They offer an affordable and arguably 'green' alternative to buying new, whilst at the same time providing a crucial source of funding to support the activities of charities, be it Oxfam, British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research UK or the Red Cross.

Relying on donations from the public, charity shops often find themselves with a surplus that they can't sell. When it comes to shifting books that have sat too long on the shop shelves, World of Books on the South Coast of England has the answer. Sourcing books from

local charity shops World of Books Ltd was launched in August 2008, with the aim of becoming the largest used bookseller in the UK. They have since surpassed this goal to become the largest used bookseller in Europe, selling to over 4 million customers in 90 countries worldwide last year. In December 2012, the company was listed at number 22 on the Sunday Times Fast Track 100 and currently has a turnover in excess of £20 million.

"Since we started out five years ago, our stock has grown from 10,000 books to over 1 million," says Stephen Boobyer, Managing Director of World of Books. "We now have a nationwide logistics operation to deal with collecting and shipping books, and we are currently selling on 18 different platforms including Amazon, ebay and our own website www.worldofbooks.com. We buy books by the tonne from over 2,000 charity shops across the UK and we're proud that our activities have generated over £4 million in payments for charities along with significant savings in waste

disposal costs. We quality check all our books, and have developed software that scans the barcode to assess whether it will sell. Those that will be stocked online. The rest are recycled into cardboard, or sold by the container load through our wholesale business, World of Books Wholesale, to developing countries, mainly in the Far East."

Checking out China

World of Books Wholesale sells its high quality reject books in four categories: children's; coffee table; mass market paperback and premium mass market where customers specify which authors they are looking for. The company's key markets are currently India, Malaysia, Indonesia and Zimbabwe. In May 2012, it decided to explore the potential for its business in China. Stephen was referred to UKTI and commissioned an Overseas Market Introduction Service (OMIS) from the team in Beijing to research potential partners and customers.

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Stephen Boobyer, Managing Director of World of Books

Through its Tradeshow Access Programme, UKTI provided a grant to World of Books Wholesale towards the costs of exhibiting on its stand at the Beijing International Book Fair in August 2012. The company participated in the event with the support of The Publishers Association, the UK's main trade association for UK publishers and an accredited UKTI trade partner with vast experience of organising UK group participation at major international publishing events.

The local UKTI team set up appointments for World of Books Wholesale with the nine Chinese candidates it had identified in the OMIS and one has since become a repeat customer. UKTI also helped to drive traffic through to the display stand. The company had meetings with a number of passing visitors, two of which (not from China) are now customers as well.

“When targeting a new market, there's no substitute for going out there to meet people in person,” says Stephen. “But, when you're taking a week out of your usual business, you want to make sure it's worth your while. UKTI's support while we were in China was fantastic and ensured we made the best use of our time. The contacts that they came up with for us were extremely useful, and we saw a lot of interest at the appointments that they had arranged. The fact that we have already had a repeat order from a new client in China shows that we are able to meet their requirements. I can't speak highly enough of UKTI and their team on-the-ground in Beijing. Their support was absolutely essential - if we hadn't had the OMIS, it would have been a worthless trip.”

New business

World of Books Wholesale estimates that the value of the new business it secured at the Beijing International Book Fair could be as much as £100,000 so far. Having been so pleased with the results of the support it received in China, the

company has since worked with UKTI to get a foothold in Australia and is currently working with the India team to open a market there.

“UKTI's knowledge and understanding of local market conditions helped us to make the most of attending the Beijing International Book Fair,” says Stephen. “They took our OMIS brief seriously and really understood what we were looking for. Anyone looking to establish routes to markets outside the UK should use UKTI. They have the advice and support that you will need.”

The UK and China

The Chinese economy has grown at almost 10 per cent a year for the last 30 years, effectively doubling in size every eight years

In 2009, China overtook Germany to become the world's largest exporter; in 2010, it overtook Japan to become the world's second largest economy, and, in 2012, it overtook the US to become the world's biggest trading nation (total imports and exports). China is also expected to become the world largest goods importer by 2014.

In 2012, the UK's goods exports to China increased by 12.8 per cent to £9.9 billion, making this the UK's largest goods export market outside the US and EU. Imports from China to the UK also grew by 0.4 per cent to £32.9 billion. Total bilateral trade in goods and services in 2012 was £46.5 billion (US\$73.8 billion), and the two countries have agreed a target to increase this to US\$100 billion by 2015.

The China-Britain Business Council (CBBC), UKTI's official trade service delivery partner for mainland China, provides advice and UKTI services to UK businesses via its network of offices across the UK and China.

For more information visit www.cbcc.org

Helping you attend tradeshows

Taking part in overseas exhibitions is an effective way for you to test markets, attract customers, appoint agents or distributors and make sales. UK Trade & Investment's Tradeshow Access Programme (TAP) provides grant support for eligible SME firms to attend trade shows overseas.

Participation is usually as part of a group, a great advantage for inexperienced businesses, and is usually led by one of our Accredited Trade Organisations (ATOs). ATOs work with UK Trade & Investment to raise the profile of UK groups and sectors at key exhibitions.

For further information please visit www.ukti.gov.uk

UKTI was delighted to support World of Books Wholesale in its business overseas.



To find an adviser in your chosen market and begin your own success story now, scan this code with your smart phone, visit www.ukti.gov.uk/trade, or email enquiries@ukti.gsi.gov.uk

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