

Precise progress

Award winning manufacturers, Ford Aerospace Ltd and Ford Component Manufacturing Ltd, have made the most of UK Trade & Investment's support to win new business in China



FAST FACTS

Company: Ford Aerospace Ltd
& Ford Component
Manufacturing Ltd

Country: UK

Industry: Aerospace & high tech
commercial industries

Website: www.ford-aerospace.com
www.ford-components.com

Ford manufactures precision engineered products for the aerospace, automotive, power generation, construction equipment and defence markets. The two family-owned companies, Ford Aerospace Ltd and Ford Component Manufacturing Ltd, are currently celebrating 100 years in manufacturing.

With 140 people working at the two manufacturing sites in South Shields and Hebburn, Ford's customers include blue chip companies such as BAE SYSTEMS, Agusta Westland, Freudenberg Technical Products, Siemens, and JCB. The company has exported its products around the world to France, Germany, Italy and the US and continues to develop and grow the business, seeking out new markets all the time.

"As part of our research into potential new markets for our products, we joined

UK Trade & Investment's Passport to Export programme," says Mark Podmore, Operations Director at Ford. "UK Trade & Investment helped us to prepare a 12 month overseas expansion plan, and carried out a gap analysis for us. We found that there is a demand for our laminate shimstock in China, so we decided to explore this opportunity further."

Focus on China

Having decided to focus on China, Ford went on to commission a number of Overseas Market Introduction Service (OMIS) reports to gain an insight into the market. This was followed by two market visits, which were subsidised by grants from UK Trade & Investment.

Whilst Mark was in China, UK Trade & Investment had set up meetings for him with potential partners, customers, suppliers, distributors and agents.

He also met with local trade bodies and participated in conferences about the legalities and practicalities of doing business in China.

"It's really important to meet face-to-face with people to build relationships," says Mark. "We could not have organised such quality meetings with potential customers and agents from our desk back in the UK. The market visits also gave us an excellent opportunity to network with other UK companies already doing business in China, and we were able to learn from their experiences. Overall, the service UK Trade & Investment gave us exceeded all our expectations. The team helped us with the translation of legal documents, and to prepare new product and market literature. They even found a Chinese student to work with us in the UK, supporting us in this new market."

Successful start

Ford decided to appoint a local agent in China, to find new leads and distribute its products. The company contacted the China-Britain Business Council (CBBC), which researched potential candidates, and advised on company regulations, trading laws and similar matters. UK Trade & Investment also qualified the agents on Ford's behalf, speaking to their customers to hear their views.

Having visited China several times, it became clear to Ford that it would need to appoint different agents to cover different regions. In January, the company appointed its first agent in Northern China, and has since received an order worth £80,000 and £300,000 worth of enquiries. Plans are already underway for two further visits to China this year.

"China is an exciting and rapidly developing market," says Mark. "It's hard to grasp the size of the country until you visit, but once you do it becomes clear that you can't possibly make the most of the opportunities out there if you go it alone. Both during and after the market visits we received excellent support, guidance and practical assistance from UK Trade & Investment, without which we would have struggled to fulfil our market potential in China. We are now in a very strong position, with a robust development strategy for China. We hope that over the next five years, we will be doing £250,000 worth of business there every year."

Helping you to do business abroad

Doing business in another country can be a challenge, so it's good to know that UK Trade & Investment is there to help you succeed.

Through a range of unique services, including participation at selected trade fairs, overseas missions and providing bespoke market intelligence, UK Trade & Investment can help you crack foreign markets and quickly get to grips with regulations and business practices overseas.

Through our Passport to Export programme we offer new and inexperienced exporters:

- free capability assessments
- support in visiting potential markets
- mentoring from a local export professional
- free action plans
- customised and subsidised training
- ongoing support once you're up and running

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



UK Trade & Investment is the Government organisation that helps UK based companies succeed in international markets. We assist overseas companies to bring high quality investment to the UK's dynamic economy.

Hit the world running ^{UK}

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The UK and China

China is one of the world's most rapidly growing economies, with GDP growth figures of around nine per cent per annum since the mid-90s. Trade between the UK and China has grown by 600 per cent in the last ten years and China has now surpassed Japan to become the UK's largest Asian export market.

The UK is one of the largest EU investors in China, with almost 6,000 British-invested projects as of spring 2008.

Key sectors where Chinese demand for British expertise is likely to be particularly strong include: financial services; energy; ICT; healthcare; water; aerospace; automotive; construction; retail; telecoms and chemicals.

Most of UK Trade & Investment's services and general enquiries for China are now dealt with by our UK Area Advisory Group for China, the China-Britain Business Council (CBBC).

For further information please go to www.cbcc.org, call +44 (0) 20 7802 2000 or email: enquiries@cbcc.org.