

Pet Project

UK-based manufacturer and distributor of pet products, Caldex Ltd, has been exploring additional opportunities in France with the help of UK Trade & Investment



FAST FACTS

Company: Caldex Ltd

Country: UK

Industry: Manufacturing

Website: www.caldex.com

Privately owned pet product supplier, Caldex Ltd, was founded in 1975 in Yorkshire, and had been a family run business for generations. Under the brand name Classic Pet Products, Caldex manufactures, imports and exports an extensive range of quality products, including drinking bottles for small animals, feeding dishes, aquarium ornaments, grooming products, dog chews, toys and beds.

In 2007, the business was acquired by Chris Egan who has over 25 years experience of the pet market, and his partner Nigel Pullan, a chartered accountant with experience of a wide range of businesses. Having undertaken a review of Caldex's export business by country, Chris felt that, along with other regions, the French market offered potential for expansion. Chris had worked with UK Trade & Investment before and was aware of the Overseas Market Introduction Service (OMIS). In late 2008, Caldex commissioned an OMIS report for France, looking specifically at major pet retailers and wholesalers.

"We did some of this groundwork using trade data, pet industry journals and the internet," says Chris. "But UK Trade & Investment's name adds authority. I believe that if enquiries come from the British Embassy, companies are likely to listen and respond. The OMIS report was extremely thorough. It listed specific contact details of people who would be interested in talking to us and even those we shouldn't approach. The whole process was excellent value for money and saved us a lot of time."

The next step

The OMIS report was completed in January 2009, and Caldex then prepared a document in French providing information about its business and products, which it sent to all potential customers throughout France. The OMIS report also specifically identified five potential pet retailers and two wholesalers for the company to contact. Initially, the communication between the companies was by email and telephone, sending brochures and samples and responding speedily to requests for information, whilst building trust and a rapport.

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In 2009, Caldex received new French orders worth in excess of £50,000, for products from across the whole range. Since then, the company has had repeat business and is currently in discussions with two further French retailers.

“In our industry we don’t have contracts,” says Chris. “Wholesalers and retailers place orders and once they are complete, there’s no guarantee that they will be renewed. Building up trust and confidence with clients is paramount. It can be a lengthy process, however we hope to be supplying our new customers for years to come.”

“UK Trade & Investment is extremely proactive”

The future

UK Trade & Investment continues to help Caldex, and the company exhibited for the first time in the British Pavillion at the Global Pet Expo in Florida in March 2010.

Caldex is also considering commissioning further OMIS reports for a number of emerging markets over the next two years.

“UK Trade & Investment is extremely proactive,” says Chris. “We feel that they are constantly looking for ways to help. For example, the British Embassy in Paris is holding a one day event in June for leading pet care distributors in France. We are hoping to attend as it would be a great opportunity for us to network with new wholesalers and retailers. We have been really impressed with their level of service and commitment.”

Fifteen top tips for working with the French

We have closely linked economies and similar markets but there is no doubt there are differences in our business culture. Here are our 15 top tips to help you make your business visit a success.

- French business culture is still relatively formal and as appearance is important – dress smartly.
- Address people with Monsieur or Madame followed by their surname. Use their first names only when invited.
- Relationship building is important. Build up a matrix of friends and contacts.
- Lunches and dinners are good relationship building opportunities.
- Much of France stops work between midday and 2pm.
- Don’t be scared to express confrontational ideas or engage in rigorous debate.
- Use logical arguments rather than the hard sell in your presentations.
- Negotiations can be lengthy due to hierarchical business structures.
- The French tend to focus on long-term objectives.
- French companies take time over decisions and an important part of their decision making is to examine a problem or proposition from every angle.
- Write to business contacts in French, using a formal style.
- French bureaucracy needs to be clearly understood and managed.
- Have your literature translated, or prepare a summary in French.
- Business meetings are often conducted in French so have someone with you who can interpret.
- Quote prices in Euros and use metric measurements.

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



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