Going Global 101

Global Strategy Worksheet

This worksheet is designed to help you articulate your goals and obstacles to going global and start you on the right path to developing a successful strategy. This document will not give you all the right answers but will help you ask the right questions, which is critical to developing a sound plan.

Also, keep in mind that going global is a journey and even many of the most global companies today began by adding just one language or country website. Facebook began with Spanish. And Amazon began with Germany and the UK.

**NOTE: You might want to create a “public” version of this worksheet that only includes information you are comfortable sharing with others.**

**Why Go Global?**

The purpose of this section is to better understand the potential for your brand and products/services in other markets.

* Have you received requests from people in different countries for your products and services? If so, rank the top five countries by greatest potential for growth.
* Have you sold products or services outside of your country, including on third-party platforms such as Amazon, eBay and Etsy? If so, rank the top five countries by sales.
* Do you have competitors that have expanded into new countries? If so, list the top five countries they currently target.
* Do you track your website visitor logs to know what countries people are visiting from? If so, list the top five countries outside of your home country.
* Are there any other factors to support expanding into new countries? Are there specific business opportunities that are compelling you to push ahead? If so, include them here.

**Your Global Goals**

Now you target two to three countries. You might also target a specific audience within a country, such as Spanish speakers within the US or French speakers within Canada. For this reason, I will use the term “market” instead of “country” going forward.

* List up to three markets you wish to succeed in. If you have only one, that’s okay.
* List the top products/services you wish to sell in these markets. You might just have one; that’s also okay.
* How will you define success in each market?
  + What are your specific goals for gaining new prospects and new customers?
  + What’s your overall sales goal for the first year within each market? Ballpark figures are fine.

**Global Obstacles to Success**

Now the hard part begins! You need to fully understand the many potential obstacles you’ll face when entering a new market, from your competitors to government regulations to currencies and customer support. For each market, you’ll want to answer these questions, noting that the answers will vary. That’s by design.

* How must your products/services be localized for each market?
  + Are there regulatory requirements?
  + Are their cultural barriers?
* Who are your competitors?
  + What local competitors current exist and why will customers choose you over them?
  + What international competitors exist and why will customers choose you over them?
* What languages must you support to succeed in these markets?
  + Do you speak or support these languages currently?
  + If not, do you have the resources to support these languages?
* Product/service fulfillment
  + How will you deliver products and services in these new markets? Consider postage, taxes, product support.
  + How will you support local currencies and preferred payment platforms? Note that not all consumers around the world use credit cards or PayPal.
* Customer support
  + How will you ensure your customers have a positive experience after they receive the product?
  + What if they want to return it? Need a repair?

**Developing Your Global Strategy**

Not that you are aware of some of the obstacles you’ll face in each market, it’s time to begin planning the best strategy for expanding into each new market – as well as for localizing your products and services within each market. You may find that some products are better suited for some markets and not others. And this is where it might make sense to focus on just one market, based on greatest opportunities and fewest number of obstacles.

For many companies, there are two aspects to going global – that of taking their products and services global and that of taking their websites (sales, marketing customer support platforms) global. Therefore, this section is broken into two parts:

**Product/Service Globalization**

What modifications need to be made to your products and services before they can be sold in each market? There are two stages to effective globalization: *internationalization* and *localization*.

A few questions to consider:

* Internationalization requires making your product/service “world ready,” meaning it can be more effectively localized for each market. What will be required to make your products world ready?
* Localization is the process of adapting each product or service to each market (and audiences within those markets). What are the costs involved for localizing for each market? Some markets may be far less expensive than others, based on translation, regulatory, and logistics costs.
* Knowing the upfront costs, do your sales projects justify the investment? Are there less-costly markets and products you can begin with to lessen the risk?

**Website Globalization**

For small businesses, the website plays the role of sales team, marketing team, and customer support team. The more effectively you globalize your website, the more effectively you’ll be able to support your global business.

Like products and services, website globalization requires both *internationalization* and *localization*. Translation, if needed, falls under the localization stage.

A few questions to consider:

* Can you leverage existing marketplace platforms to test new markets, such as Amazon, eBay or Etsy to reach customers around the world? Doing so might allow you to more easily test demand and prioritize markets before investing in website globalization.
* How “world ready” is your website? How easily will the text be translated? Do you have extensive visuals and video files that may require more extensive investments in localization?
* Do you plan to support ecommerce? If so, how will you support different currencies, time zones, shipping partners and delivery challenges?
* Can you support customers who speak different languages? If not, how do you manage expectations for support?
  + Are there local partners and/or vendors you can work with to assist with customer support and other local needs?
* Is your brand name world-ready?
* How will you promote your website and brand around the world? Have you registered country codes?
* Will you support local-language social media platforms?
* And do you have a mobile strategy?

**Next Steps**

This worksheet forms the foundation of your global expansion strategy. As you develop a plan for action and budget, keep this document on hand to make sure you don’t overlook anything.

And keep in mind that going global requires flexibility. Your strategy will evolve as the world evolves, including geopolitical events, currency fluctuations, new local competitors and regulatory changes.

By completing the worksheet, understanding the competition, and understanding your current and potential customers, you are more likely to avoid so many of the surprises (and mistakes) that other companies have made along the way.

PS: For a much more in-depth globalization checklist, check out the book   
**Think Outside the Country,** available on Amazon, by request at your local bookstore, or at <https://www.bytelevelbooks.com>.