

How local SMEs can win new business overseas

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2 May 2023

An increasing number of businesses in South Africa are looking to expand globally to take advantage of the country's competitive currency, favourable time zone, and cost-effective environment. According to a report by Business Process Enabling South Africa (BPESA), the country's business process outsourcing (BPO) sector has experienced an average annual growth rate of about 25% between 2015 and 2021.



Kai Cranko, CEO of Superhuman Sales | image supplied

With South Africa sharing a timezone with several countries in Europe as well as having a high standard of English speakers, it's increasingly common to find South African businesses — from call centres to IT providers and more — servicing the rest of the world.

But if you're a South African business looking to bring in more foreign currency and target key sales leads in other parts of the world, you may be asking yourself how you can start to achieve this?

At Superhuman Sales we have globalised our own business to the point where half of our revenue now comes from outside of South Africa. All of this has been achieved through highly targeted email lead generation. Email remains the world's biggest and most important communication tool for businesses.

And in today's world, you'll have a better chance of setting up a meeting with a client by using email, rather than cold calling.

So, if you're branching out into new markets, and want to test the appetite for your product or service in other countries, here are some tips on how you can best approach this by using email.

It starts with 'hello'...

Looking to set up a sales call with a potential client in France or maybe The Netherlands? Why not start with writing "Bonjour" or "Hoe gaat het met u" in the opening line of your email?

Unless you are fluent in the language of your prospect, the rest of your email can still be in English. But this small sign of respect for another's language and culture can go a long way in opening a door.

At the heart of successful email lead generation is the use of more localised and regionally-specific copy.

The more targeted you are in your communications, the better you'll be at getting that first opportunity. Localisation helps your target audience respond more positively to your messaging and it further helps better understand your market.

Target smaller companies first

A temptation on the part of many South African businesses when they globalise is to try and catch the big fish first. But a better strategy is to have many fishing rods in several small ponds.

A key reason for this is that smaller companies in Europe or other developed parts of the world have much higher buying power than what their same-sized counterparts in South Africa would have. It will also be much easier to get a meeting with the key decision maker in a smaller business than a bigger one.

Therefore, focus on emailing the smallest viable segment of your market first and then gradually scale up as you build a reputation in a new market. As you grow, build up case studies to help you along the way.

In the beginning, you must also be prepared to "fail fast" and test different markets without necessarily investing heavily in sales teams or other infrastructure. Here, email will be critical in helping you get ahead.

Time zones, time zones, time zones

Another consideration is the practical aspect of time zones, particularly when dealing with countries that are further away from South Africa.

In your targeted sales emails you include links from calendar booking platforms, such as Calendly or SavvyCal, that allow prospects to book appointments quickly and easily.

What's crucial here is that you must take your prospects' time zone into account. If you're willing to talk to your client in, for example, North America at 2am South African time, then be sure to open up these slots on your calendar.

However, if this is not something that is practical for you, a good start is to first focus on markets that are closer to the South African time zone, such as Europe and the Middle East.

Price in your customer's currency

A final consideration is how you talk about pricing in your sales emails. We suggest talking to your customer about your pricing in their local currency.

If your prospect is sitting in the UK, be sure to provide them with your pricing in pounds. If your customer is in France, use Euros and so on... . This will go a long way in helping your targeted sales prospect with understanding your offering better, while also showing your global finesse.

All of these tips are just the starting point in helping to get your business out there. But in our globalised world, there's no doubt that expanding to other markets is more possible than ever before.

It's an exciting time and taking that next step in your sales journey can start with a thoughtful email.

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