



midlands world trade forum

[www.mwtf.org.uk](http://www.mwtf.org.uk)

## Quarterly News Letter

November 2002

Dear Member,

We recently reached a major milestone in the history of the MWTF. Launched in November 2001, the forum has begun to establish itself as the model for similar organisations around the UK.

We continue to try to bring you useful information and opportunities via the web site, and encourage you to both interrogate the site and contribute to the information development. Recent additions to the *bulletin board* include useful contacts in Malta, using it as a springboard into Mediterranean based markets and the Middle East, and a request for help in respect of the US dollar !

The web site enables you to interact in a number of different ways. The *ask the expert* page creates a one to one interaction between you and a relevant expert (depending on the nature of your issue/question. Broaden the debate on a topic, or simply broadcast for help/advice to the membership as a whole by using the *bulletin board*.

Our *events* schedule, again outlined on the web site, is also growing, and we are now in the process of finalising a programme for the 12 month period commencing April 03.

We welcome Hereford and Worcester Chamber to the forum, and look forward to evolving the interaction with local businesses within this region.

An important part of the forum is to consolidate member concerns and issues, and to ensure that these receive the appropriate attention. Whilst we do attempt to drive out comments in respect of a variety of business issues, the web site enables you to instigate this through the *lobbying and representation* pages.

The forum aims to help create an environment where members can contribute to, and draw from, real business experience and expertise - as well as providing an access point to other expert support. The web site, networking events, and other communiqués have been put into place for your benefit. By using them, you will help shape and mould their functionality and effectiveness for the benefits of the whole member base.

If any of you need any help in navigating the web site, or possibly need your passwords re-transmitting, please contact Steve Bryan on 0121 607 1759.

### Membership

- General

We are on track to achieve our target membership of 150 companies by the end of December. Current membership stands at **137**. Our mix of members is also well balanced with a ratio of approximately 50/50 experienced exporters to new/novice exporters.

- Roll out throughout the West Midlands

Hereford and Worcester Chamber have embraced the concept of the MWTF, and we are now seeing a steady intake of new members from this area of the West Midlands. Follow on discussions with the rest of the West Midlands are currently being scheduled.





### Web Site

We are in the process of reviewing the web site, looking to increase the "value" of this medium to MWTF members. Aswell as refreshing the look and feel of the site, we are also considering the functionality, ease of use, and ability to solve more problems via this route.

Your views and comments in respect of the site are always welcome – please forward to [info@mwtf.org.uk](mailto:info@mwtf.org.uk)

### Profile on Germany

Despite Germany's well-publicised current economic problems, the country remains Europe's largest, both in terms of population (82.1 million) and GDP (approximately \$1,865 billion in 1999) and therefore an important target market for British exporters. British companies exported some \$40 billion's worth of goods and services to Germany in 1999. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Germans outperformed us on that score, exporting some \$52 billion's worth in the same period to the UK.

One positive aspect about doing business in Germany is the fact that, yes, most managers in larger organisations *do* speak English to a high general standard. This means, for example, that once a business relationship is established, contact can be verbal and not just confined to the written word (although Germans nearly always insist on written confirmation of any verbal message). Nevertheless, the following points should be born in mind:

- Thousands of small to medium-sized businesses are still run by the men who set them up in the fifties and sixties. "Der Chef" (the boss) may well not speak English or not wish to be forced into speaking it.
- Regardless of whether or not the purchaser can speak English, the would-be exporter should remember a simple truth, summed up once by Willy Brandt, a famous German Chancellor: "If I want to sell to you, then, of course, I speak English – but if *you* want to sell to *me*...dann sprechen Sie Deutsch!"

Here are a few points to remember when going on a business trip to Germany:

- Always be punctual, this is extremely important in Germany. Some allowance is made for the horrendously overcrowded motorway system, leading to frequent jams – so owning a mobile (called a Handy in German) helps lessen the affront.
- Shaking hands is an important start to meetings in most circles. Even if there are a dozen attendees or more, it is good manners to work one's way round the whole table/whole room.
- German business people are happier working to an agenda than attending unstructured meetings, even if the agenda only has three points on it (including introductions!). They will expect to have to do some preparation for some of the points, so circulating the agenda well in advance is good form.
- Never offer or promise something that cannot be fulfilled. For example, if a sample in a certain material or a quote for 1,500 red XYZs is offered, then sending a sample in a different material or a quote for 1,500 blue XYZs will go down badly. Similarly, if you offer to do something you will normally be asked by when: give a realistic timing -and stick to it! Reliability will nearly always rate much higher than innovation in a German supplier rating.
- Applause in German meetings is given by knocking on the table or even stamping on the floor rather than by clapping.

This information was prepared by Chamber Translation Services, our expert for language and cultural issues in the "Ask The Expert" section of our website. Chamber Translation Services can organise high-quality translations, interpreting and language training in German and many other languages. Phone 0121 450 4230 for details.



### Member Profile (Barrie Blackmore, Advance 2021 Multimedia)

"Advance 2021 Multimedia have developed an exciting communications technology platform. By providing TV style movie clips via the internet, promoting a company's products, capabilities and competences can take on a new dimension. Having started a test site at the beginning of 2000, the company now provides customised movies at a fraction of the cost of normal TV advertising rates.

Developing opportunities within the UK can be very frustrating at times. The USA and parts of Western Europe are far more advanced and open to the idea of using this form of advertising and marketing medium for promotional purposes.

Our market potential though is enormous, and we see the MWTF as a good source of territorial and cultural knowledge to help us avoid some of the potential pitfalls and effectively overcome some of the hurdles that may arise as we look to grow our business. We also hope to be able to educate other businesses in terms of this as an opportunity for them !"

Barries contact details are available under *member information*, *member listing* on the web site !

### New Electronic Exporting System (NES)

The UK Governments commitment to full electronic services by 2005 is driving HM Customs and Excise to implement an electronic processing system designed to provide greater assurance to traders, and help HMCE meet its legal and procedural obligations more effectively.

Essentially, if you are an exporter or freight forwarder and you currently make paper declarations (C88's) to Customs, you will be required to make them electronically in the near future.

The new system went live at the Port of Dover on 4/3/02 with other maritime ports and airports expected to go live progressively through to the first quarter of next year.

For more information in respect of the system, go to our web site, *useful information* and then *useful links* and search under the HM Customs and Excise link.

### Events

Several recent events have proven successful for differing reasons.

Our presentations in respect of Hong Kong and Malta were very informative, and opened up the opportunities of using our contacts there as platforms for business development into China, the Mediterranean region and the Middle East. One member comments on the Hong Kong luncheon *"Great to have met you at the HK event Friday week ago and you put together a good event. I look forward to seeing you on the 14th. The contacts I made at the event have been the biggest bonus of being a member of the MWTF"*.

Our first "members meeting" introduced the concept of "focus groups" which enabled members to actively participate in debate and discussion, followed by creating a series of recommendations regarding specific operational issues/opportunities within the MWTF. The format for this meeting was considered very successful. Certainly the level of activity within the focus groups suggested that members felt comfortable and very prepared to interact in this way. The overriding message from the Baroness Symons was that she was very pleased to have the opportunity to discuss real business issues with the attendees at our recent event, and that our comments and messages were definitely NOT falling on deaf ears. Issues raised with her included the UK position on the Euro, increased costs and complexities introduced by NES, and costs introduced in relation to new security approvals.

A programme of events for 2003/04 is currently in draft. Our programme though currently continues with the following:

6/12/02 – Selling to the UN, one to one clinics with Eleanor Baha.

Obtain valuable advice and information in respect of pursuing opportunities in this potentially enormous market arena.

31/1/03 – Exporting excellence: Making British Business a by-word for Corporate Social Responsibility and Anti-corruption.

The main objectives of this event are to:



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- Promote awareness of recent and forthcoming changes to UK Law and OECD Convention.
- Promote the benefits of Corporate Social Responsibility at all levels of industry
- Promote awareness of the forthcoming Company Law Bill

Ongoing quarterly members meetings are also currently scheduled for 6/2/03, 1/5/03, 7/8/03 and 6/11/03. Details of the content and focus for these will be notified to you progressively.

If you'd like us to cover any business topic, perhaps arranging a members focus group on a particular Country or Business Sector, a workshop on a specific operational or business issue, or even a larger event, then please contact us – either via the web site [www.mwtf.org.uk](http://www.mwtf.org.uk) or by eMail [info@mwtf.org.uk](mailto:info@mwtf.org.uk) with the details.

Keep an eye on the *events schedule* for new events as we solidify our plans.