



midlands world trade forum

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

## Quarterly News Letter

August 2002

Dear Member,

The past couple of months have seen the MWTF profile raised in a number of ways.

Our comments on the Euro and Insurance premiums have stirred media interest at a local and national level, and we continue to push for positive responses from the Government and Insurance companies in particular.

Aswell as receiving coverage in the press, Peter Mathews CMG, our Chairman, has been interviewed on BBC Radio and Radio Saga – all of which further strengthens our ability to offer a conduit and voice for local businesses.

Presentations have also been made to Trade Partners UK at a variety of levels, where the MWTF model is now being widely recognised and acknowledged as “the” operational model for similar organisations around the UK.

If you have a business issue for which you'd like our support, don't forget you can register it on the web site “*Lobbying and Representation*” page. This is *your* forum, Chaired and Led by business people, created and evolving to help you develop your international trade capabilities and activities.

### Membership

- General

Good progress is still being made with the development of our member base. Again, this growth enables improved networking opportunities with like-minded business people – networking facilitated either in near real-time via the MWTF web site, or physically at any of the events currently posted on the “*Events*” pages, again on the web site.

Now with **97** members, our philosophy of an Exporter to Service Provider ratio of 5:1 is more than being sustained.

- Roll out throughout the West Midlands

The strength of the forum is also being enhanced by evolving our presence and philosophy throughout the rest of the West Midlands region.

Businesses in the Hereford and Worcester area will soon be enjoying the benefits of the forum, aswell as further extending your networking capabilities.

We hope to conclude similar operational relationships in Shropshire, Staffordshire and Coventry & Warwickshire shortly.

- Member Review

Most of the feedback we received indicated a need for more networking opportunities. We are in the process of evaluating requirements before extending the current programme of events. Whilst we have captured a list of topics/subjects, we always welcome your inputs – and you can continue to forward any suggestions to me by email on [s.bryan@birminghamchamber.org.uk](mailto:s.bryan@birminghamchamber.org.uk)





### Web Site

The latest addition to the web site is our newsfeed into the "*BCI Digest*". This provides a useful summary of news on a daily basis, and gives you links to a number of press web sites.

The MWTF web site has received around **11500** hits since February !

Remember, this facility enables you to contact and interact with like minded business people, operating in similar market places and business sectors – willing to share their experience which may be of use to you !

### Profile on France

- Event 17/6/02

At a recent event held in the Birmingham Council Chambers, the French Chamber of Commerce hosted a presentation by a variety of French and UK business people outlining the business culture/philosophy, and opportunities – particularly in the Bordeaux/Aquitaine region, which appears to have a very cosmopolitan mix of businesses and industries.

Contact details for the French Chamber of Commerce in Great Britain, and the Bordeaux Regional Development Agency are available on request.

- Culture Corner (Sue Webber)

France is the UK's third biggest export market and its closest one. In theory, there is no language barrier (we all learnt French at school, didn't we ?), and since the opening of the Channel Tunnel, there has been no physical barrier. While there are some differences between the Anglo-Saxon and Gallic business cultures, these are not extreme and should never prove a stumbling block to concluding a deal. Here are just a few points to remember when going on a business trip to France:

- Always shake hands when meeting someone (even late arrivals to a meeting) and again when leaving.
- If you cannot speak French, it is advisable to apologise, as French is the official language of business in France (and indeed has a proud history of being the international language of diplomacy).
- If you can speak French, remember that business language always starts off on a formal level and frequently stays that way for the whole of a business relationship, even spanning decades. That means, always start with "Madame" or "Monsieur" plus the surname and use the "vous" form. With time, you may progress to first names plus "vous" or even on to the familiar form "tu" – but most French people address their colleagues formally, even when they have worked together for many years.
- Eye contact among the French is frequent and intense.
- Food and wine are an intrinsic part of French culture generally and play an integral role in French business relationships. Business can be conducted over a slow-paced lunch in a restaurant, frequently consisting of three courses plus wine. It is quite usual to seal a contract during lunch. Whoever initiates the meal is expected to pay.
- Most French businesses are traditionally shut for lunch between 12.00 and 14.00 hours. Even if your contact stays at his/her desk with a sandwich, you will probably not be able to get through the switchboard to talk to him/her. On the other hand, office hours normally run from 08.30 to 18.00, so contacts are generally available earlier and later in the day.

This information was prepared by Chamber Translation Services, our expert for language and cultural issues in the "*Ask the Expert*" section of our web site. The staff, which includes native French speakers, are happy to advise on aspects of the language and culture, and can organise high-quality translations, interpreting and language training in French and many other languages. Phone 0121 450 4230 for details.

### Member Profile (Graham porter, of Currie and Warner)

Currie & Warner Ltd are a long-established (since 1855) precision engineering manufacturing company, based close to the centre of Birmingham, and have benefited from exporting a large proportion of their annual turnover since 1986.



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Being (very) specialist sub-contract manufacturers, producing high-volume turned-parts according to customer drawings, the company do not actually have their own end product !

However, by focussing over many years in a "niche" technical specialisation (complex parts in brass or bronze materials only, in very large annual series), the company has managed to consistently maintain an export market turnover that exceeds 40 % of our total business.

Although our manufactured components are often to be found in household or everyday commercial applications (i.e. bathroom showers, heating controls, refrigeration controls, gas cooker appliances), because they are generally hidden away inside larger assemblies, our "products" are rarely seen and recognised.

Geographically, the markets that Currie & Warner supplies are typically USA / Canada, Scandinavia (primarily Denmark & Sweden), Germany (mainly Southern), Netherlands and a small amount into Spain.

Whilst the company is considered by many as a "seasoned exporter", our association with the MWTF continually brings fresh ideas and opportunities, and you can never get enough knowledge concerning aspects of overseas trading !

### **Events Schedule**

The following are currently scheduled:-

#### ***Seminars***

10/9/02 Int'l Trade Clinic (Solihull)  
12/9/02 UNHCR  
19/9/02 New Zealand Business Clinic  
27/9/02 Secrets of Exporting Success  
7/10/02 Business opportunities with the EBRD  
11/10/02 Hong Kong Luncheon  
22/10/02 How to sell to the US Government  
5/11/02 Int'l Trade Clinic (Solihull)  
7/11/02 (TBC) MWTF Members Meeting  
4/12/02 Selling to the UN (1-2-1 Clinics with E.Baha)  
6/12/02 UN Geneva Business Clinic

#### ***Trade Missions/Explorers***

8/9/02 Nigeria, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire  
27/10/02 Argentina, Chile and Uruguay  
3/11/02 Canada  
3/11/02 Explorer to Ireland  
10/11/02 Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda  
17/11/02 Poland (HWC)  
24/11/02 Hungary (HWC)  
25/11/02 China  
6/2/03 Iran

In addition to these, we are currently planning a visit/meeting with Baroness Symons, Minister of State for Trade and investment and Deputy Leader of the House of Lords, on 22<sup>nd</sup> November – full details of which will be posted shortly.

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.