

# Getting Export Smart

## Exporter case study



### Becker Helicopters

Becker Helicopters trains local pilots and exports helicopter pilot training DVDs and manuals globally, concentrating on the European, Asian and American markets. The company aims to produce high-quality materials so that pilots finish their training highly qualified and ready to work.

Based in Maroochydore on the Sunshine Coast, Becker Helicopters is in its 14th year of operation and now exports across the globe.

#### Motivations to export

Mike and Jan Becker started the company with one helicopter, a business plan and a dream to take the company to an international level within five years.

While its core business is teaching people how to fly helicopters, the company has expanded to develop helicopter training DVDs, which are sold worldwide. Becker Helicopters was able to find a niche in the market, allowing the company to go global by developing a training manual that married the theory and practice of flying.

#### Activities that contributed to its export success

Mike and Jan Becker contributed to their export success by investing in a significant amount of training. They attended a variety of exporting courses and read numerous books. The couple saw the value in learning from those who had been through the experience of exporting before.

Mike and Jan also saw the importance of learning more about international business and seeking accreditation. They researched exchange rate variances, international taxes and trust funds, and sought out every accreditation possible so they could enter the international marketplace with credibility.

Mike and Jan chose their target export market based on three criteria: the market had to be in a similar time zone as Queensland to facilitate same-day communication; the primary language of business had to be English; and it had to operate on a civil aviation licence that was based on Europe or England. Asia met all three criteria, and had the added advantage of a growing aviation industry.

### Lessons learned and mistakes made along the way

The Beckers learned that it takes a tremendous amount of planning, courage and tenacity to begin exporting. In the beginning, their philosophy was to “throw mud on the wall and see what sticks”. Over time they learned to plan for the realities of dealing with overseas customers, such as long-haul travel and international time zones.

Mike and Jan also discovered the importance of targeting markets that had potential beyond individual students, aiming to secure corporate contracts where they could train around 20 students at a time. They considered it much easier, more cost effective and less time consuming to train a group of students, leaving Mike and Jan with more money and time to concentrate on their core business.

### How exporting has benefited the business

Becker Helicopters is now an international business, giving it access to the global economy. The Beckers say they are not bound by the Australian economy or dollar and can tap into other economies around the world.

Exporting also gives the company the ability to seek out corporate opportunities and contracts, as entering the international market place has given it access to key decision makers.

### Assistance received from the Queensland Government

The company credits Trade Queensland’s overseas offices with helping it enter the international marketplace, providing contacts and setting up meetings that Becker Helicopters may not have been able to secure without that connection. Working with Trade Queensland gave the company the credibility to be able to meet with key decision makers that could answer its questions and make contract decisions.

### Words of advice for exporters

Becker Helicopters understands the importance of using a professional company website to market to overseas clients. The company’s website allows customers to research information, make enquiries, buy training materials and enrol in physical training.

The Beckers also believe it is important to manage your website and build a database of online visitors, which will help you market your products and generate sales to a global audience.

This case study was prepared for the **Getting Export Smart** workshop series.

For more information about the Queensland Government’s export services contact:

#### Export Advisory Service

Trade Queensland  
GPO Box 1412  
Brisbane QLD 4001

**Tel** 07 3224 4035

**Fax** 07 3835 1002

tradeinfo@qld.gov.au

[export.qld.gov.au](http://export.qld.gov.au)



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[beckerhelicopters.com.au](http://beckerhelicopters.com.au)