

DOING BUSINESS ABROAD

MORE THAN JUST CHEESE AND WINE

Population: 61m
Main Exports: Cars, food, wine (£18bn to UK)
Main Imports: Aircraft, plastics, chemicals, power generating equipment and machinery (£20bn from UK)

France's proximity to the UK, and excellent communications, mean that a business visit to France may now involve a shorter journey than is necessary to visit many parts of the UK. France takes about 10% of UK exports and the UK is the third largest foreign investor in France.

If your product or service is selling well in the UK domestic market and you are interested in expanding your business by exporting to mainland Europe, France, while not a natural starter market, with careful research and a professional approach, can yield good results.

Who should you send to negotiate? This will depend to a great extent on the nature of the business. However, the French do like to deal with someone with whom they can build up mutual respect. Good interpersonal skills are therefore important. Language aptitude is highly desirable. It may be a better option to engage a French national.

Unless their identity is part of their marketing strategy, most investors prefer to adopt a fairly low profile and to project a French image. An easy way to do this is simply to acquire a French company or use French personnel.

Every prudent business carries out market research and evaluation before attempting to break into a market. Acquiring knowledge of local laws, regulations and trading practices, as well as on legal and tax issues, is an important element in order to obviate potential risk. This is even more important when making any investment decisions when trying to enter the French market.

Korman Mandel & Henaff lawyers of Paris work closely with Temple & Co Commercial, Solicitors in Daventry, (who were awarded the East Midlands Business News Legal Services Award 2004) in assisting UK businesses enter the French market, by winning investment support from the French authorities, by inward investment into France, as well as in employment, distribution, corporate acquisitions, and joint venture issues

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