



EXPORTER SPOTLIGHT

IC BLUE LTD

IC Blue Ltd support the Electronic Manufacturing Industry with component sourcing, excess inventory management and design automation software.

We caught up with their Director, Matthew Ward to find out how, with the help of the Department for International Trade (DIT), they have focused on export to grow a global business.

TELL US ABOUT THE COMPANY

We formed in 2003 to address a fundamental shift in how global supply chains in the semiconductor market operated. There became a huge concentration into fewer suppliers, which predominantly affected the SME manufacturing sector and reduced choice. We formed to offer alternative options in supply by sourcing globally, and outside of restrictive supply agreements.

WHY DID YOU BEGIN EXPORTING?

In the early 2000's there was a significant shift in mass hi-tech manufacturing. While the UK retains low volume hi-tech manufacturing for prototypes and specific applications, the mass volume output companies are predominantly located overseas.

We moved to being primarily export focused within the first years of inception. We found it easier to recruit

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salespeople in the UK with language skills, which allowed us to offer a comprehensive and efficient supply service with native language speakers, while being based in the UK. With the speed of air freight delivery, there was no difference for our customers in Europe to a domestic supplier.

WHERE DO YOU EXPORT TO?

Semiconductors are used globally in every industry. With the push towards mass transport electrification and focus on renewable energy there is component usage in every country, even those without large manufacturing sectors use components for maintenance and repairs. This gives our business model a unique opportunity for expansion into every territory.

In the current global supply chain, where demand is far outpacing supply, the ability for IC Blue to access its own customer base for production overstock means that we can support customer component demands all over the world, from outside of the traditional supply network.

80% of our turnover comes from export. 70% of that is from the EU with our most significant markets being Spain, Italy, Poland, Turkey and Greece.

We also export to Portugal, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania, Germany, France, Ireland, Bulgaria, Netherlands, Argentina, Brazil, Morocco, India and Hungary.

HOW HAS DIT SUPPORTED YOU?

DIT offered invaluable support throughout the EU exit period. They framed our decision to establish a Dutch logistics hub for our customers in the EU. Their support helped us to make the decision to handle all requirements and costs brought on by importing into the EU through the newly established hub. This enables our customers to receive an intra EU shipment free of taxes and duty.

The Government Covid-19 bounce back loan gave us the confidence to expand. We grew from 32 people to 48 in one year and heavily invested in technical infrastructure to upgrade our capabilities. We also invested into stock and additional customer facing services which enabled us to capitalize on global component shortages caused by Covid-19. We grew from £9m turnover in 2019/20, to £16m in 2020/21, and £39.5m in 2021/22.

DIT continue to help throughout our export journey, whether that be facilitating connections or aiding investment into overseas tradeshows. We recently received a grant via the Internationalisation Fund to exhibit at Matelec, Spain in November.

HOW HAS THE COMPANY BENEFITED FROM EXPORTING?

Exporting is fundamental to the operations of the company and we would have never grown how we have without it.

An overstretched supply chain coupled with the effects of Covid-19 have the potential to stifle the momentum towards a more energy efficient world. IC Blue LTD is supporting customers to access the parts they need from the global supply chain.

Selling overseas presents limitless growth potential, and allows our company culture, values and unique selling points to be enriched by operating in new cultures.



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHERS LOOKING TO EXPORT FOR THE FIRST TIME?

Exporting is just one part of the transaction, getting the import side clear from your customers perspective is equally important. However, don't be off put by hurdles, they tend to be easier to overcome than they first appear.

There is a lot of support available once you have really focused on what you want to achieve and how you plan to get your goods and services to the end user.

WHAT IS NEXT FOR IC BLUE LTD?

We are actively recruiting additional language skills to support existing markets and establish new ones. Our whole growth is reliant on accessing native language speakers.

In the short to medium term, our markets of focus are South Africa and South/Central America.



Department for International Trade

The Department for International Trade (DIT) helps businesses export, drives inward and outward investment, negotiates market access and trade deals, and champions free trade.

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