

Export Manager

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WHAT I LIKE BEST ABOUT THE CAREER

"I bring people together - forging relationships between buyers and sellers, creating products, creating business. And, as my own boss, I get to decide when I work, where I work and how I work."

THE WORKING WORLD

"Develop entrepreneurial skills and seek opportunities to practice them. Fewer and fewer jobs are 9 to 5 salaried positions - the virtual company is the way of the future."

EMPLOYER

Nakodo Consulting (President)

EDUCATION

*Bachelor of Agricultural
Economics*

YEARS IN WORKFORCE

18 years

SALARY RANGE

\$35,000 - \$150,000

CAREER PATH

*Trade Director,
Trade Assistant(overseas),
Private Consultant*



• Michael • Leslie •

WHAT IS AN EXPORT MANAGER?

In an age of globalization, many companies are pursuing new, international markets for their product. Export managers facilitate this process, helping to identify potential clients, establish contacts and bridge a language or culture gap to establish a trading partnership. Michael Leslie, President of Nakodo Consulting Inc., provides this service to Canadian and American food processors seeking to do business with Japan.

WHAT DOES AN EXPORT MANAGER DO?

Nakodo means "marriage maker" in Japanese. "My job is like a marriage broker," explains Michael. "I put together buyers and sellers, I get them dating and hopefully they get

married. So, it's ultimately a consulting firm that specializes in relationships." Working with a partner in Tokyo, he helps Japanese clients find Canadian companies that have or will develop a product to suit their needs. Michael assists the parties in all phases of establishing this partnership, which may require adapting the recipe, flavour or packaging to suit the new market.

Adding Value Michael specializes in value added products, and sees that as the only viable future for an industry where commodity prices are in decline. "I don't deal in boxed beef, for example," says Michael. "I would rather ship precooked hamburgers in a bun with ketchup all cooked, frozen and ready to eat." The key is to understand what kind of value the customer will pay for, and that requires someone with a clear



RELATED CAREERS

Export clerk

Export clerks work in trading divisions of larger companies or for private consultants, handling the paper work and all of the logistics of the shipment, including trucks, containers, delivery and freight orders.

Consultant

Private consultants in the export business offer a range of services to companies that cannot afford or do not require full time export managers or export clerks.

Senior Manager

Companies pursuing international markets require senior managers with expertise and experience in serving these markets.



understanding of the language, the culture, the product and the customer.

Details In exporting, every detail counts. Exporters get paid on the basis of submitting an exact set of documents and each shipment requires anywhere from five to ten documents. If those documents are not exactly right, the product may not be permitted to enter the country and/or the company may not get paid. Export managers or the clerks that report to them ensure every detail is taken care of.

HOW TO BECOME AN EXPORT MANAGER

"If you want a job like this the best thing to do is learn a second or third or fourth language," says Michael, "then get job experience using that language in a trade environment." That process certainly seems to have worked for Michael, who learned Japanese through several years of working in Japan, first as a trade assistant and later as Director for the Canada Beef Export Federation. A Bachelor's Degree in Agricultural Economics and years of work as a Trade Director with Alberta Agriculture also contributed to the broad

expertise required for this career.

Many export managers start as an export clerk in the trading division of a large company. Learning the trade takes anywhere from one to two years. Although a university degree is not required, Michael recommends taking some business courses to gain a background in North American business practice.

Beyond academic studies, export managers need "good cross-cultural skills, people skills, and an ability to thrive on chaos," says Michael. "If you want a regimen, it won't happen." It's also important to enjoy the culture, language and food of the people. "If not, the customer can smell it," claims Michael, "and he'll make you go through a lot more hoops."

THE FUTURE

If Alberta is to remain competitive, it must increase its participation and ability to serve an international marketplace. As this trend continues, companies will need the help of export managers like Michael, who can lead the way into unfamiliar territory.

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For more info, check with Janet Henderson,
 Alberta Food Processors Association
 at (403) 201-1044
 or visit the website at www.afpa.com