

UPDATE ON YORKSHIRE & HUMBER COMPANIES

by Brian Aungiers

In March 2006 I visited Saudi Arabia as part of the interchange programme. Having previously exported to, and lived and worked in the Kingdom I wanted to reevaluate potential prior to developing a Yorkshire and Humber Region/Saudi Arabia strategy.

In April 2007 we took our first Trade Mission to Saudi Arabia to coincide with British week. The company profile was diverse and included Food & Drink Companies, Trainers, Industrial Coatings, Electrical Equipment Suppliers, and Valve Manufacturers. The mission included a number of females, several of whom were targeting education of females.

The majority if not all missioners commissioned OMIS reports which identified primary contacts, and the mission brochure we produced which was emailed out by the post in Al Khobar attracted many more key people to the Reception we hosted, and the exhibition provided at Asharqia. As a result, all but two or three of the companies have now established business with Saudi companies. Notable amongst them are Mumtaz Foods, who gained listings for their Halal Baby Food Range in 600 stores in Kingdom and estimate sales will soon reach £250K per month.

As a result of the extremely wet weather just prior to the mission, Thermilate, an industrial coatings manufacturer, sold £50K worth of roofing membranes to one of the Shopping Malls during the mission, and began to establish sales of his thermal coatings to construction companies. This has resulted in the establishment of a Middle East base in Dubai, and regular visits to the Kingdom by Middle East based staff. The Managing Director tells me sales are now in excess of £350K per year, and he is now looking to set up a base in Kingdom. Similarly, Office Products, supplying office electrical goods established sales in the Eastern Province, set up his first overseas office in Dubai, and continues to supply the Kingdom from there.

In November 2007 we brought a second mission, once again to the Eastern Province. Lessons learned from the first mission allowed us to be much more focused. This mission included a footwear manufacturer, training companies, specialist software companies, a portable scaffolding supplier, and oilfield equipment companies. The Women in Business sub theme continued, and several

female entrepreneurs were sponsored to attend the mission to deliver presentations to female members of Asharqia. Each has subsequently secured training contracts with Saudi companies and return regularly. Stella Kenway, of Zanoubia is currently producing Saudi Business Directory and deliver training to women's groups in the Eastern Province, Joanna Lavan of Alfran has training contracts in Jeddah, Riyadh, and Al Khobar, whilst Saeeda Ahmed from Trescom has training contracts in Jeddah.

A Leeds based company – Access Brands – met with a company at the official reception who placed an order with him the following day – with payment – for £58K. They continue to supply this customer.

Tyreseal, a Huddersfield based manufacturer of automotive aftercare products called me last week to say that he has just signed a contract with a Saudi distributor. The first order, paid up front is for £400K

The resounding success from this mission was Mirza Shaharyar Baig Group, a safety footwear manufacturer. Mirza Baig has signed a distributor agreement with Al Tuwairqi in Al Khobar, and is currently delivering against the first year's programmed orders for £1.5M. The 5 year plan forecasts sales of £10M in the 5th year.

Wireless Media Services, a Halifax based software house also attended the mission. Although he didn't have initial success he was subsequently contacted by a Kuwait based company that he met at the mission reception. He has signed agreements to supply his GSM based intranet platform software to the company which has a presence in 19 countries, including Saudi Arabia. The total value of the contract which will roll out over the next two to three years is in the region of £10M.

In addition to missions we have been working closely with a number of companies interested in breaking into the Middle East.

Mamas & Papas is a £100M Huddersfield based designer and retailer of baby and nursery products. As a result of initial work we did with them they targeted the Middle East because of high birth rates, and relatively high disposable income. Over the last three years myself and another member