



*Max Fletcher,
Chairman of the
RGBB Healthcare
Special Interest
Group gives us a
personal view of the
state of the market
in the Kingdom.*

should proceed to do business in KSA; this holds true equally not only for new business but existing exporters, who should be seeing substantial growth.

Leading UK manufacturers who have succeeded in this market have only done so by appointing an experienced expatriate representative. Failure to understand this basic requirement by some UK companies has in the past and will in future allow European, US and other global competitors to gain a foothold, which may probably be difficult to challenge, this could result in a serious loss of business for UK-PLC. We are already seeing some very aggressive marketing from Italy and France with respect to this sector.

It should be in the interests of UK Trade & Investment to recommend to any supplier the appointment of an in Kingdom, or better still a Gulf area (GCC) representative, at the very least a (part time) consultant based in KSA, to act in the interests of the principal exporting company.

It must be accepted and understood that the main motivation of any Saudi Agent is profit, with little concern for future business opportunity, promotion or market development, if this involves capital outlay and reduces immediate profit returns. The only control available to any principal is through their directly employed local representative or consultant.

It is no longer simply a matter of appointing an agent and sitting back hoping that business will follow, UK companies need to seriously consider the advantages of an experienced area representative, even if only part time. This has certainly proved to be a most cost effective method of maintaining product visibility and promotion, (for example Eschmann Bros. Surgical Equipment Supplies, a UK leading supplier who for many years had

their own rep. in Kingdom), providing the company with accurate market studies and reports. Understanding the need for this resource and investment in the Medical and Scientific business in the GCC countries will have both short and long term benefits for UK business interests.

If it is accepted that the potential of the market is substantial, not only in Saudi Arabia but also throughout the Gulf Area and certainly in Iraq. UK Trade & Investment should look at and consider taking a more active interest in assisting any principal supplier to locate and use the experience of a locally based consultant or representative.

The benefits of having a consultant does not require any clarification and are self-explanatory. Not only does he or she have a personal interest in seeing a positive growth in product sales but may be the only person with the knowledge to advise on the selection of the correct local agent, with sufficient market share and funding to maintain investment in a professional sales and service organization, while keeping the suppliers account in good order. Most importantly, arrange the correct type of agency agreement to protect the principals interests. Only the consultant can provide unbiased reporting, close control of their agents activities, including monitoring academic support, training, marketing new and existing products, problem solving at customer level, local pricing, direct order promotions, and most importantly Agent credit control. The value of monthly targets and sales review with the local agent is obvious. Finally the Customer also has a point of reference and direct contact with a Company representative.

Whilst the RGBB health care special interest group has only been established for a short time and is few in number, it has members who are expert in business development and other outside specialists who can offer advise in the marketing of health care products.

TWO FEET DO NOT MAKE A YARD

Ken Aldred
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As a health care practitioner for more years than I care to remember, one of my greatest numbers of referrals (after the dreaded low back pain), are foot related problems. We only get the one pair of feet in life, and yet they are undoubtedly one of the unsung heroes of our many highly efficient systems encompassed in the mainframe that is our body. From waking each and every day, to finally calling it a draw and heading off to the land of nod at the end of it, our poor old feet are expected to cart us around without a hint of complaint.

The fact that they are squashed into footwear that can be too small, too short, too narrow, or just plain incorrectly sized is a problem that beggars belief, and yet I see this on most days of my clinical sessions. This is not an issue that prevails only here in KSA, although it is exaggerated by the dominant use of sandals, whereas back home in the UK, the lack of sunshine for 360 days per year precludes this.

The average person will gladly part with a very large sum of well earned cash, in an effort to look great wearing the latest in trendy fashion statements, and subsequently the vast majority of footwear tied on the end of our lower extremities has been sold to us with little or no knowledge by the salesperson, who probably doesn't care if your feet fell off, as long as you make a purchase before limping from his shop.

If all that is not bad enough, we then have our beloved female partners, who persist in distorting their poor little tootsies by forcing them into shoes that were plainly designed by a member of the Spanish inquisition, who no doubt obtained numerous confessions by use of this dubious method of torture. But, as they look good, they must be OK.

Well, they are not OK if they are not a good fit, and time should be taken before making a purchase. If we can do it with clothes, then we have to do it for shoes, and the beneficiary will be our poor old feet, along with our general wellbeing.