

CEO Update: 10 Tips to Impress the Boss

Every international manager spends hours preparing senior management presentations. What happens when you get called to see the CEO “right away” or you see him in the elevator coming back from lunch? The obvious question is “how is it going?” Export Solutions shares our 10 tips to “impress the boss.”

Shipments vs. Annual Budget

The CEO has the corporate number to hit and wants to know if you will achieve your fair share. Orders are nice, but shipments translate to revenue. Measure progress versus time elapsed and compare versus similar time period last year. Publicly traded companies are concerned with quarterly metrics, while privately held businesses may focus on total year budgets. Be specific, be accurate, and do not appear overly optimistic. Discuss shipment performance first before you raise points regarding market dynamics.

Remedial Plan

Some exporters are blessed with healthy businesses, tracking ahead of pace. Most of us will land right on target. A few are struggling. Shortfalls happen for a hundred reasons including currency fluctuations, competitive activity, and reduced investment. The key is to have your remedial plan ready. Do not be afraid to ask for more spending if you need help. If management refuses, at least you have tried to correct the gap versus expectations.

Core Countries

Focus your update on the top five countries that drive your business. This sounds obvious but I have personally listened to many enthusiastic success stories about Latvia, Malta, and Bahamas. Good news, but the chief wants to know what is happening in focus countries.

Risk to Plan

CEO's assessment by the board depends on accurate guidance on current performance as well as long range outlook. Smart executives can read shipment reports, but want to identify potential risks to the plan. Surprises are tough to digest. Transparency on challenges as well as upside is appreciated.



What's Working? What's Not?

Many companies export to 20, 50, 100 countries or more. Results include a mix of top performers and laggards. I endorse the practice of sending a mid-year, one-page report card to each distributor. Include a request for feedback on “what's working and what's not.” Share key findings with your manager and CEO.

How Can We Double the Business in Three Years?

The CEO wants your opinion on accelerated growth options. Leaders are not content with 5 percent increases. Doubling the business may include acquisitions of overseas category players or construction of offshore factories. Think big!

Required Investments and Resources

Historically, export is starved for resources. Which comes first: sales or investment? Lay out your priorities for the executive team. Validate export rationale for more headcount.

Test Updates

Every company should be seeking new ways to solve old problems. Update management on new initiatives. Share positive news as well as tests that provided learning, but results behind expectations.

How is the Team?

Export development is a team sport. Caring CEOs will want to learn how your group is doing, particularly in offshore locations. Share your organizational development plan, training activities, succession planning, and status of new hires.

How Can She (or He) Help?

Most CEOs are supportive and genuinely interested in helping. Business in the home country may be mature and international always provides a pathway to higher growth. Create your short “wish list.” Invite the boss to visit your markets or call a key distributor. Ask for support for your “pet” project. Always keep your immediate manager in the loop!