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Coltraco Ultrasonics

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Carl Stephen Patrick Hunter, CEO and Managing Director of [Coltraco Ultrasonics](#), spoke to us about the company's 25 years of exporting and how ASEAN remains one of the most exciting destinations.

Coltraco Ultrasonics specialises in the watertight and compartment monitoring of marine structures (the biggest reason for ship loss at sea is sinking) and in the monitoring of highly pressurised gaseous extinguishing systems used to protect them (the second biggest reason for ship loss at sea is fire) by the use of ultrasonic technologies. Ultrasound is sound beyond the audible range. We design and manufacture in the UK, conducting all our science in the UK and exporting 89% of our output to 108 countries. We operate across a number of market sectors in these including shipping, fire, power generating, offshore energy, renewables, wind, and naval.

Recently, we became one of the UK's Best Innovators 2017, won Seatrade Supplier of the Year to the Cruise Industry 2017 and this year been nominated for a Seatrade Asia Safety at Sea Award. As a leading manufacturer of ultrasonic technologies we like to think that we are, "showing you the way with the sound you cannot hear".

Entry to Markets

We started looking at Southeast Asia because we witnessed first-hand the "Tiger Economies" while living in the region.

We utilised the fine services of the old UKTI (now DIT) and FCO, using specifically the Market Information Services to find our first customers and distributors. They pointed us towards our first export sales and distributors and launched our press releases by translating and distributing them from posts overseas to local trade and regional publications.

We saw Singapore as the regional hub and in Singapore a country which shares much of the UK's Common and therefore Contract Law, and with ethical trading enshrined in this.

In 2014, we established an Organisation with Delegated Authority (ODA) Service Station in Singapore to act as a maintenance and engineering hub. Singapore provided the regional base for our exports to Commonwealth ASEAN countries of Brunei and Malaysia, and from there and

over time we expanded to Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines and Indonesia.

Today, Asia accounts for 40% of our exports and ASEAN contains some of our closest partner countries.

Next Steps

At Coltraco, we agree with the Secretary of State and DIT in their prediction that 90% of all economic growth will derive in future from non-EU countries and that ASEAN countries will be a prime driver in this. The UK's links to ASEAN are greatly assisted by the three Commonwealth members of them in Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei, but this is not to understate the UK's presence in some of the other emerging markets.

In the near future, we are looking to expand our operation in Singapore and open a commercial office. We are also looking closely at Indonesia, which we see as an emerging G20 economy. More broadly, we aspire to become the global leader in our core technologies across the ASEAN region.

'Top Tip' for a new exporter to ASEAN

I believe that any company who succeeds with export-potential products or services in our highly competitive G5 economy is already "fit to export", so don't be afraid.

In 25 years I have never seen the time that "HMG is ahead of business" as it is today in many ways. The work that [DIT](#) and the [UK-ASEAN Business Council](#) is doing to encourage UK companies to export is extraordinary and recent developments, such as the expansion of scope and availability of [UK Export Finance](#) are fine and structural additions to our exporting "armoury". In short, our advice would be to take advantage of the great support structures available here.

For ASEAN specifically, firstly, immerse yourselves in an understanding of who the UK is overseas so that you understand what your customers think of you and the UK. Secondly, learn the magic of "the East" and to contribute to it. Thirdly, learn the historical, strategic, cultural, educational, diplomatic and political links that bind the UK to each of the countries within ASEAN. Research and prior understanding are pivotal to success. Finally, remember that in ASEAN countries price is important. We try to be "better, faster, cheaper" in all that we do. You can too.

UKABC can greatly accelerate your exporting journey to ASEAN countries. Contact the UK-ASEAN Business Council who is one of the most energetic and dynamic organisations to support UK business today.