



ISTEP Funds Help Local Manufacturer Expand Exporting to UK, Brazil, Mexico

by Megan Wieser
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EDWARDSVILLE – A longstanding Collinsville-based manufacturer of industrial ink jet printers and other products is expanding its exporting to three additional countries, thanks to funding and expertise via the Illinois SBDC International Trade Center (ITC) at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Marsh Shipping Supply Co., LLC (MSSC) – the maker of industrial printing, marking, sealing and stenciling products – has been exporting its products for decades to more than 250 distributors worldwide.

In 2019, MSSC connected with ITC Director Silvia Torres Bowman and joined a trade mission to Chile and Peru. Financial support from the Illinois State Trade and Export

Promotion (ISTEP) program equipped MSSC with the expertise and funding necessary to participate in the trade mission, which resulted in the company adding two distributors – one in Santiago, Chile and one in Lima, Peru.

The 30-employee manufacturer now exports to 57 countries. According to MSSC President and CEO Craig Eversmann, approximately 30% of the company's sales come from outside the U.S.

“Thanks to the ongoing help and expertise of the International Trade Center at SIUE, we've successfully leveraged CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act and ISTEP funding to work with a global website consultancy firm,” Eversmann said. “We've begun 2021 with four new websites, each one speaking to the specific country to which we're now exporting. This funding covered the entire cost of designing these new, localized websites.”

“Thanks to the State of Illinois, the ITC and Silvia, we're now talking about next steps in our marketing efforts to find customers and distributors,” he added. “We're growing our markets in the United Kingdom, Brazil and Mexico, and our new websites and one-on-one relationships are making that possible.”

Last summer, MSSC was also granted ISTEP funding to recertify one of its products to comply with the new UL safety specifications effective in 2020. This will allow the ITC's longtime client to enter the European market with the product.

“The ITC has been working with Craig and the MSSC for the last 20+ years,” Torres Bowman said. “Craig is not only our client, but also an outstanding partner and longtime supporter of the ITC, serving as a mentor to other small businesses in the region by providing valuable guidance on how to develop an active export business while navigating the unique challenges of selling abroad. The pandemic provided an opportunity for this southern Illinois exporter to study how to scale its exporting strategies and increase its overall reach. We're delighted to be able to tap into vital funding for small businesses to assist him and many others in any way we can.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic represents an unprecedented disruption to the global economy and world trade, as production and consumption are scaled back across the globe,” noted Eversmann. “My business, along with many others in the region who depend on foreign customers to flourish, need help to survive and continue to be profitable during these trying times. ISTEP funding, along with continued support and encouragement from the Illinois SBDC International Trade Center at SIUE, have positively impacted my company's success in the global marketplace.”

Eversmann is president of the Southwest Illinois Trade and Investment Council, an organization that has spent the past few years working in concert with the ITC to build local business by establishing markets for trade internationally and at home. He also collaborates with Torres Bowman as a regular cohost and speaker at the ITC's monthly Virtual Trade Roundtable series. In December 2020, he shared his experience as an ITC client. View an excerpt of his presentation at siue.techsmithrelay.com/Tr4a For more information on MSSC, LLC, visit msscllc.com.

For more information about the ISTEP program or CARES Act funding, contact the ITC by email at [International-Trade-Center@ siue.edu](mailto:International-Trade-Center@siue.edu) or phone at 618-650-3851, or visit siue.edu/business/itc.

The Illinois SBDC International Trade Center at SIUE serves businesses in Southern Illinois by providing individualized, no-cost export advising, identification of foreign buyers, agents and/or distributors through trade leads, international market analysis and more. The ITC is funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, as a service to the region's entrepreneurial and business community. As a key member of the Illinois SBDC Network, the ITC delivers these important services to its clients while supporting the goals and objectives of both the SIUE School of Business and the University at large.

Photo: Marsh Shipping Supply Co., LLC (MSSC) President and CEO Craig Eversmann.