

QUALITY MANAGEMENT: LINKING TPOs AND NSBs FOR EXPORT SUCCESS

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I. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam exporters have been facing difficulties in meeting international standards for their export products. In the context of global economic integration, where trade barriers have been released, replaced mostly by non-trade barriers, Vietnam exporters are incurring more difficulties in entering foreign markets due to their lack of sufficient quality of the products. As a result, in order to find a stable stand in a fierce global competition today, it is a must to pay attention to quality of export products.

The demand for export products from developing countries has been increasing year on year. In order to curb the chance, Vietnam has to improve the quality of export products at a similar pace. So the role of trade promotion agency is to bring to attention of enterprises the importance of the quality concerns.

II. THE ROLE, STRUCTURE AND SCOPE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Vietnam Trade Promotion Agency (VIETRADE) is a governmental organization responsible for state management, coordination and implementation of trade and trade-related investment promotion activities in Vietnam.

VIETRADE works together with various provincial trade promotion centers and trade support institutions as well as international and foreign trade promotion organizations to assist Vietnamese and foreign enterprises in their business development and expansion.

Main activities are:

- Providing economic, trade and investment information to businesses;
- Assisting Vietnamese and foreign enterprises to identify business opportunities, customers, suppliers and partners through dispatching trade missions abroad, hosting foreign business missions visiting Vietnam and organizing business meetings;
- Facilitating organization and participation in trade shows in Vietnam and abroad;
- Training in trade promotion and export marketing;
- Providing consulting services and technical assistance in trade and export production;
- Developing e-commerce capabilities;
- Supporting foreign businesses to develop business in Vietnam;
- Coordinating trade promotion activities in Vietnam;
- Proposing Government policies and measures for development of business support activities;
- Developing facilities for trade promotion, and
- Cooperating with international and foreign counterparts in trade promotion.

Vietrade provides a wide range of services mostly free of charge for enterprises.

For enhancing productive capacities of exporters: we have been organizing training courses and seminars for enterprises; providing consulting services in the phase of design products that meet stringent requirements and regulations in different target markets concerning quality standards, specifications for health, safety and environmental and consumer protection. We also cooperate with foreign institutions to organize seminars on environment protection mechanisms. Furthermore,

information on latest regulations of different target markets is daily updated on the website of Vietrade for enterprises reference.

Vietrade in cooperation with other state organizations creates favourable conditions for enterprises in doing business and trade promotion. Specifically, procedures of registration, export certification and other programs are uploaded on the website, therefore enterprises can easily download. Registration for organizing domestic and foreign trade fairs, and other trade promotion activities is simplified.

Vietrade has specific department to provide consulting services for enterprises in terms of international market requirements, and searching for new partners. Annually, Vietrade disseminates missions abroad including study trade missions and trade fair/exhibition delegations in order to equip enterprises with practical market information. There are also a number of business-match meetings arranged by Vietrade in Vietnam for companies to find more business partners. In addition, Vietrade is carrying out national trade promotion programs to support enterprises in searching for new markets and strengthening export capacities. Besides, the national branding program of Vietrade was created in order to enhance the image of Vietnam's products on international market and to encourage enterprises to focus on quality and export products on their own brands.

The quality management needs from Vietnam enterprises will be transferred to respective departments within the organization. Regarding quality issues, we provide basic information for different markets. Specific needs will be transferred to specialized organizations. We refer the needs to the Directorate for standards, metrology and quality or other related organizations for concrete instruction and information.

At present, Vietrade is handling all ranges of commodities and sectors. The service is, therefore, provided basing on type of needs, markets and regions. Exporters have difficulties in acquiring very specific needs in Vietrade due to the fact that Vietrade is not targeting particular sector. In stead, it can recommend or cooperate with other organizations to provide the answers.

In three years, Vietrade aims to professionalize the services provided basing on specific sector. Target sectors are still agricultural products, handicrafts, textile apparel, footwear, wood and wood products, etc. This is in line with the national sector priority.

III. THE EXISTING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NSBs AND TPOs

Vietrade has a wide network of domestic and foreign business organizations. For TPOs, Vietrade has a close relationship with different foreign trade promotion organizations. The relationship has been established through the participation of Vietrade in different regional and international forum and/ or through contacts with different embassies and trade offices in Vietnam. We cooperate with TPOs world wide, from Asia (JETRO, AJC, AKC, KOTRA, KITA, CCPIT, DEP, MATRADE, etc), Europe (CBI, GTAI, SIPPO, etc) and others. These organizations have been cooperating well with Vietrade in trade promotion activities, including sharing and exchanging professional experience, arranging working schedules for Vietnam business missions and others.

Besides, Vietrade also has relationship with various domestic business associations to understand more about needs from enterprises and thus, having plan to help them in increasing exports. Under the national trade promotion program, business associations are developing trade promotion programs to receive financial assistance from the state for the purpose of strengthening exports.

Regarding relationship with national standards bodies, Vietrade has contact with the Directorate for standards, metrology and quality (STAMEQ).

IV. The POTENTIAL FUTURE relationship between NSBs and TPOs

The main challenge in the current relationship between Vietrade and NSBs is the lack of regular and tight cooperation. Vietrade needs to actively work with NSBs to get updated information regarding quality management for export products. Additionally, should cooperate with NSBs to organize training courses and seminars on quality management issues for exporters.

The most potential cooperation between NSBs and TPOs for Vietnam lies in most of the sectors and service areas namely seafood products, textile and apparels, footwear, wood and wood products, electronic items, etc. These areas are facing increasing technical barriers that exporters have to pay attention to.

Vietrade is the focal point for counterpart to provide any trade-related information.

For effective cooperation and working relationship between NSB/TPO, there should be a formal arrangement. Organizations should sign memorandum of understanding which specifies ranges of activities to cooperate. This is necessary because the cooperation will have the basis to last long.

Strong cooperation among TPOs and NSBs will help improve the effectiveness of activities of those organizations themselves. It creates chances for the organizations to learn and exchange professional experience for better performance. Exporters and investors themselves will benefit better from services provided by TPOs and NSBs. Close cooperation among TPOs and NSBs also can help develop better export policies in order to enhance exports.

IV. CONCLUSION

There can be no doubt that in the global context nowadays, in order to be accepted in the world market and increase the market share of Vietnam export products, it is necessary to attach the importance to the quality management. Therefore, enhancing the cooperation among TPOs and NSBs in order to help exporters in developing countries better understand the importance of quality and the strict compliance of international standards with different target markets is becoming more essential than ever. And I do hope the consultation seminar on “quality management: linking TPOs and NSBs for export success” will find out various measures for the effective cooperation between TPOs and NSBs.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT



Shyam K. Gujadhur
Sr. Adviser, Standards and
Quality Management
Palais des Nations, CH-1211
Geneva 10, Switzerland
+41 22 730 0111
quality@intracen.org

Ms. Tran Ngoc Diep, Deputy Director,
Export Development Department,
Vietnam Trade Promotion Agency,
Tel: +84 39347628
dieptn@vietrade.gov.vn