



Small Business Export Initiative Interkama Trade Mission 2001

Brian Kunding, president of Auburn Hills Michigan based Analytical Process systems (APS), initially signed up for the Interkama trade mission after researching possible avenues into the German marketplace. He visited Germany two years prior and said he kept getting the same response from potential business partners: "Do you have someone local to sell or service your products?" So, when Kunding heard about the German trip he saw it as the perfect opportunity to take the global leap, and locate the international partner his business needed.

On September 22, Kunding and representatives from nine other southeast Michigan firms boarded a plane and headed overseas. The trade mission to Germany, which included floor space in the Interkama trade show in Dusseldorf, was a huge success for Kunding, in terms of contacts and contracts.

"We had five Gold Key appointments arranged by the Department of Commerce, and meetings with three other companies at the show," Kunding said. "We have continued to get appointments after the show from contacts we made at Interkama."

In fact, a direct result of the trade mission was a joint marketing agreement signed with Nova MMB, headquartered in Schwarzenberg, Germany. APS manufactures specialty testing equipment, such as canister conditioning systems, and Nova will represent the full line of APS equipment in Germany.

"We were familiar with Germany and needed a rep/sales agent for sales and services," Kunding explained. "APS was 80 percent U.S.-based when we made the decision to participate in the trade mission. The Interkama trade mission fit with our strategy to go global."

Kunding noted that having corresponding German companies pre-screened and appointments pre-arranged is not only a cost savings, but just makes good business



Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson and Analytical Process Systems (APS) President Brian Kunding at the 2001 Trade Mission in Germany.

sense. "The U.S. Department of Commerce did a lot of the advanced research for us to make certain the companies we met with were a good fit. It would have been very difficult to get those meetings on our own. It also was very cost effective."

Kunding estimates his costs would have been ten times higher if they had not participated in the Interkama trade mission.

APS continues to follow up on contacts made from the German trade mission. As the company's business continues to expand beyond southeast Michigan, it has added bilingual brochures in English and German to the firm's marketing materials.

Kunding has some advice for those businesses unsure about taking the global leap. "If you're looking to expand into the international market, Automation Alley and the Department of Commerce is the best tool for doing that."

If you are interested in participating in a trade mission, please contact Hayes W. Jones, MDCP Program Manager, at 248-975-9636.

Automation Alley is a consortium of more than 370 progressive technology organizations in southeastern Michigan, one of the most dynamic and affluent regions in the United States. The Automation Alley Small Business Export Initiative is a program in partnership with the U.S. Department of Commerce to help area companies develop growth opportunities through global partnering. The program includes four trade missions to foreign markets through 2003 and is focused on small and medium sized firms which produce or distribute items with at least 51 percent U.S. content or value.