



UKTI puts Ridgeview Wines ahead of the game

Fast facts

Company: Ridgeview Wine Estate

Industry: Food & Drink

Target Market: Finland, New York

UKTI Services: Passport to Export; Export Market Research Scheme; Tradeshow Access Programme; Overseas Market Introduction Service; Export Communications Review

www.ridgeview.co.uk



Support from UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) has helped Ridgeview Wine Estate to proactively explore new markets. Since working with UKTI, the company's production has increased from 30,000 bottles a year to 250,000 and exports now account for 20 per cent of its business.

Dedicated to creating world class sparkling wines, husband and wife Mike and Chris Roberts founded the Ridgeview Wine Estate in the South Downs of England, in 1994. Since then, the second generation of the family has joined the business, which today employs 13 people and produces 250,000 bottles a year.

In the early 2000s, Ridgeview recognised that there was a renewal of interest in the English wine industry, in particular for sparkling wines. Keen to be ahead of the game, the company

began to plan for increased demand and prepare itself for export success.

Ridgeview really began to see export success after its 2002 vintage won the 2005 Yarden Trophy for non-Champagne sparkling wines in the International Wine and Spirits Competition. Soon after, the company was contacted by a Japanese importer who placed an order. It then started exhibiting at the London International Wine Fair, a key event where it secured two export contracts: one to Finland and one to Holland.

"I've been in business a long time and I've seen how important it is to export if you really want to grow your operations," says Mike. "We are driven by the goal of winning the world's best sparkling wine trophies. With each award we win, our name and reputation spread and international orders soon follow."

Global potential

Confident that there was global potential for its wines, in 2009 Ridgeview contacted UKTI for support in approaching new markets. An International Trade Adviser (ITA) suggested that the company begin by joining Passport to Export, the UKTI programme that helps businesses to prepare for international markets. This was instrumental in helping to devise an effective strategy for overseas growth.

Having beaten Champagne to win the 2010 Decanter World Wine Award for best sparkling wine, Ridgeview again attracted huge international interest, including from New York. The company decided to meet some local retailers and find a distributor there. It received funding for a five-day visit through UKTI's Export Market Research Scheme (EMRS).

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Mike Roberts, co-founded of the Ridgeview Wine Estate

This was the perfect opportunity to get a feel for the market, find out what appetite there was for English sparkling wines and understand price points. Shortly after the trip, Ridgeview appointed Grand Cru as its distributor and has since also employed a Brand Ambassador both to support the growing business in New York and to set up in Washington DC.

“There’s a six year cycle from vine to bottle, so we had time to take a considered approach to expanding overseas,” says Mike. “Passport to Export really focussed our minds on developing a proactive strategy that would help us to achieve the export levels we were looking for. The programme let us turn the tables somewhat - rather than waiting for calls to come in, we decided for ourselves which countries we wanted to get into and planned how to do it. If we hadn’t had the EMRS funding, we wouldn’t have gone to New York nor developed a deep understanding of the market. We would have had to rely on emails and phone calls to connect with potential distributors. Trust is crucial when you’re appointing someone to represent you overseas, so having UKTI’s support to go there and meet people face to face was invaluable.”

Continued support

UKTI continues to support Ridgeview. An ITA is available to offer advice and guidance about which new markets to target and how. In 2011, the UKTI team in Finland hosted a promotional event for Ridgeview at the British Ambassador’s residence in Helsinki, through its Overseas Market Introduction Service (OMIS). Existing and potential customers mingled during the day, and in the evening a select group of 20 guests were invited to an intimate dinner at which Ridgeview wines were served. Three new customers then placed orders, and the company hopes to repeat this success with a similar event in Washington DC in the near future.

In 2013, funding through UKTI’s Tradeshows Access Programme

(TAP) allowed Ridgeview to exhibit at international trade fair Prowein in Dusseldorf, Germany. UKTI’s Export Communications Review also proved useful in re-designing the company’s website to make it more appealing to international markets.

“The wine industry can be something of a monopoly, and it takes time to have an impact in a new market,” says Mike. “UKTI has been extraordinarily helpful to us and their support has really impacted our business. As well as the funding and practical support with events, we have benefitted from the individual mentoring that our ITA gives us, helping us to review and question what we are doing. We’ve already achieved exports of 20 per cent and with UKTI’s continued support, we are on track to increase this to 25 per cent by the end of this year.”

The export advantage

International trade has always played an important role in the UK economy. Today it accounts for almost 20 per cent of the nation’s GDP.

Exporting can be challenging, but the benefits can be the difference between profit and loss. Research carried out by UKTI shows that:

- companies that export become 34 per cent more productive in the first year alone
- 59 per cent of companies that exported either developed a new product or service or modified an existing one
- 85 per cent of companies reported that exporting led to a ‘level of growth not otherwise possible’
- 87 per cent said exporting had significantly improved their profile or credibility
- 73 per cent said exporting had increased the commercial lifespan of products or services

For more information about exporting please go to www.gov.uk/ukti

Helping you attend tradeshows

Taking part in overseas exhibitions is an effective way for you to test markets, attract customers, appoint agents or distributors and make sales. UK Trade & Investment’s Tradeshows Access Programme (TAP) provides grant support for eligible SME firms to attend trade shows overseas.

Participation is usually as part of a group, a great advantage for inexperienced businesses, and is usually led by one of our Accredited Trade Organisations (ATOs). ATOs work with UK Trade & Investment to raise the profile of UK groups and sectors at key exhibitions.

For further information please visit www.ukti.gov.uk

UKTI was delighted to support Ridgeview Wine Estate in its business overseas.



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