



Optima Systems breaks into US medical data market

Fast facts

Company: Optima Systems Ltd

Industry: IT

Target Markets: USA, Sweden

UKTI Services: Passport to Export,
Trade Mission

www.optima-systems.co.uk



UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) has helped Optima Systems to launch in the US medical data market, resulting in new contracts, part ownership of a small US company and expansion into Sweden.

Optima Systems was set up by five directors in West Sussex in 1990. Their aim was to provide specialist programming and consulting skills, making technology an asset for businesses to improve efficiency and profitability. Before long, the company became involved in virtually all areas of modern computing.

Optima's client base covers most sectors including financial, pharmaceuticals, aerospace, government, manufacturing, marketing and service industries. Whilst three years ago the company did not have any customers outside of the UK, by the end of 2014 exports will make up close to 20 per cent of its business. It now employs 18 people and in the last three years has started moving into the area of medical data analytics.

"A few years ago, we started speaking to a former colleague who is now CEO of Galileo Analytics in the USA, about the possibility of using our software for medical forecasting - predicting future health trends for populations," says Paul Grosvenor, Managing Director of Optima Systems. "The software has wider uses, but we were more familiar with the medical world. At the time we didn't have the right connections within the UK to try to sell our product to the National Health Service (NHS) for example, and he suggested that there would be a big market in the US. Working together we co-developed our product."

Boston bound

In July 2012, Optima came across an advert for UKTI and got in touch to discuss the possibility of getting into the US healthcare market. UKTI suggested that the company participate in a forthcoming sales and marketing trade mission to the Advanced Conference in Boston in October 2012. Before doing so, Optima joined Passport to Export, the UKTI programme that helps businesses to prepare for international

markets, and managed to join the trade mission at the last minute.

At the conference, Optima benefitted from UKTI's advice and guidance about the US market and met a number of people who would become useful contacts for developing the business. The company also met one of the key NHS decision makers with whom it had been wanting to make contact.

"The conference, and UKTI's insights, were incredibly helpful and really opened our eyes to the business potential of our software in the medical sector," says Paul.

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Paul Grosvenor, Managing Director,
Optima Systems



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Paul Grosvenor, Managing Director, Optima Systems

“After the UKTI Trade Mission, in November 2012, we went on to participate in UKTI’s ‘winning and delivering business overseas’ two-day course in the South East of England. This again was very useful and gave us lots of tips about doing business internationally, as well as legal guidance on setting up a company abroad. Most importantly, UKTI gave us the confidence to believe that working overseas was perfectly doable, even for a relatively small company.”

US launch

Whilst on Passport to Export, Optima set itself an objective of securing three new business clients in the US before the programme ended in April 2014. The company achieved this and more. In late 2012, it secured a three-month pilot project with a large American cancer charity. Optima’s role was to provide software for its new initiatives, which would collect real time patient data on a large scale and make it available to medical professionals around the world. The company hopes to continue working with the charity in 2015, and in the meantime has secured several smaller contracts providing software to others in the US medical sector.

Also in January 2013, UKTI gave Optima legal and administrative guidance in its purchase of a 44 per cent share in fellow data research company, US-based Galileo Analytics. Galileo continues to co-develop the software with Optima and looks after sales and marketing in that market. In May 2013, Optima, which has a Swedish employee, started working with UKTI in Sweden where there is a large potential market. By July, it had opened a Swedish subsidiary there.

In March 2014, Optima began working in collaboration with Galileo and data collection agency Cegedim Strategic Data, marketing a rapid turnaround market assessment product. The company’s real-time visual analytics combined with Cegedim’s global health

record databases provide the life science industry with a needed solution to inform critical business decisions. The companies expect their first combined sales to be finalised in September 2014.

In May 2014, Optima started the Gateway to Global Growth programme, and in July 2014 secured its first major overseas contract, working with Galileo Analytics once again but this time also with a large international pharma company analysing clinical trials data.

“Working with UKTI has shown us that there is a market for our product overseas,” says Paul. “We’re really excited by the contacts we have made and the business we have secured. The results have been excellent. With UKTI, there are always people around who can help. They have made a real difference to our business and given us the confidence to keep on going.”

The UK and the USA

The UK and the USA are each other’s single largest investors and most important partners in science and innovation. In fact, more than a quarter of new investment projects in the UK come from US investors, and bilateral trade between the UK and the USA is worth around £120 billion per year.

In 2013, the USA continued to strengthen its relationship with the UK, funding 501 projects and creating 32,488 new jobs. About a million people in the USA work for British companies, while a further million in the UK work for American firms.

The US economy is integrated and largely self-contained, with every major industry represented. The sheer size of the USA means it should be treated as a series of regional markets with varying characteristics.

For further information about business opportunities in the USA, please go to gov.uk/ukti

Helping you to do business abroad

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Through a range of unique services, including participation at selected trade fairs, overseas missions and providing bespoke market intelligence, UK Trade & Investment can help you crack foreign markets and quickly get to grips with regulations and business practices overseas.

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- Free capability assessments
- Support in visiting potential markets
- Mentoring from a local export professional
- Free action plans
- Customised and subsidised training
- Ongoing support once you’re up and running

UKTI was delighted to support Optima Systems Ltd in its business overseas.

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