

Alpha Industries, Inc, Virginia

Alan D. Cirker, President and CEO

Alpha Industries, Inc. is a 50 year old apparel company that began business in 1959 as a contractor making military clothing for the U.S. Department of Defense. Beginning in the 1980's Alpha decided to expand its business by making apparel for commercial customers and there was no reason to confine these markets and customers to America. However, reaching these conclusions and implementing them were two different things. It was one thing to decide on a business strategy. But how could Alpha, a Knoxville, Tennessee based company with limited resources (people and financial), locate reliable partners in the international market? Who could provide advice and guidance about how to do business in the international arena? Fortunately, the United States Department of Commerce (DOC), Office of Textiles and Apparel (OTEXA) provided a number of programs that offered the answers to Alpha's needs.

Alpha contacted OTEXA and the Department's Commercial Service program (CS) in the 1980s and outlined its business plan to develop sales in the overseas market. OTEXA and CS were extremely helpful in offering suggestions and plans to achieve Alpha's goals. Using the CS Gold Key program, searches for appropriate distributors were initiated in several countries by the commercial attaches through the American embassies. The search located several candidates interested in Alpha products in each market. The CS search report also provided an analysis of each candidate's interest and ability. Meetings were arranged in each country to interview the candidates. Assistance was offered regarding import and customs regulations for each nation. As a result of all these efforts by OTEXA and CS, Alpha was able to locate and build an extensive network of distributors and customers in several nations.

As a result of its partnership with OTEXA and CS, Alpha has built a substantial international business for its brand. In Japan, one of the most difficult apparel markets in the world, Alpha has remained successful for more than 20 years. In Japan, Alpha initially exhibited at the Tokyo International Fashion Fair (IFF) as part of the American Pavilion organized by OTEXA. After several years Alpha's business had grown to the point where Alpha left OTEXA's nest and, with Alpha's Japanese partner, operated its own trade booth at the IFF.

In essence, OTEXA has operated as an incubator for Alpha in developing a significant international business for Alpha. It opened the doors, located potential partners, offered advice on customs and business practices and held our hand as the first steps were taken. Thereafter, it was up to Alpha to develop its business and grow to point where it could stand on its own. Without the incubator services provided by OTEXA it is doubtful Alpha could be as successful as it turned out in executing its strategic approach to acquiring foreign business. The services provided by OTEXA were excellent, at a cost that was affordable to medium to small size companies and entirely a pleasant experience.

Mr. Cirker states "For Alpha, OTEXA's assistance to American apparel companies is one of those success stories and I urge any company looking to increase its business to contact OTEXA to explore its options".

For more information on Alpha Industries, visit their website <http://www.alphaindustries.com/>