

## **INTERNATIONAL TRADE ADMINISTRATION AND OTEXA SUCCESS STORY**

### **CTF ENTERPRISES - FIXNZIP**

CTF Enterprises is a small business in Portland, Oregon that has a huge vision: to revolutionize the way the world repairs zippers. We have our own unique patented product, FixnZip, a universal zipper slider that repairs zippers anywhere without tools or sewing. The company was operating out of a small warehouse office, with \$30,000 in annual sales, limited inventory and manufacturing. Our product would only work on certain zipper sizes and was very industrial looking. There was no pay for the one part time employee who left and it was ready to close at the end 2011. Our team took over with a new vision and plan in January of 2012 and relaunched the company in the summer of 2012. We updated and improved the product and manufacturing, and created a three pack that fit all the zipper sizes with universal application to any type of zipper, and enhanced the appearance and function of the FixnZip. New packaging, branding and marketing greatly improved our image and our sales.

The plan was to market in the U.S. and in five years, sometime in 2017, to try and see if there was an international market for our product. In 2013 through the Oregon Biz Export program we went to our first international Outdoor Show in Freidrichschafen. Oregon Biz connected us with the U.S. Department of Commerce who gave us great assistance in learning the ropes of exporting. Our international sales program was launched.

The best thing that the U.S. Department of Commerce did for our company was to introduce us to the U.S. International Trade Administration and Mary Lynn Landgraf of the Office of Textiles and Apparel (OTEXA). In 2015 we went to our first OTEXA Show, DSEI in London, UK in September. Since that time we have participated in seven OTEXA Shows and have two more slated before the end of this year. Mary Lynn is an amazing mentor and has been there for us at every turn.

Our sales at the end of 2016 had increased 10 times from when we relaunched the company. The rise in our international sales has been outstanding. Our international sales now account for a very significant part of our overall sales, around 30%. We now have active approximately 20 international distributors, who are selling in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, The UK – England, Ireland and Scotland, Spain, Germany, Italy, Scandinavia and other European countries; China, Japan, parts of southeast Asia, South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique and Botswana. We are only in the beginning phases of seeing the results of these recently placed distributorships and reaping the rewards of putting these international partners in place.

Our sales were up 42% from 2015 until 2016, and the numbers of units sold were up by 82% to 85,687. While these are not big numbers, they represent tremendous growth for our small company. With our international distribution systems and partners we expect accelerated growth in the future. We are on track for significant sales growth in 2017 as well.

We are deeply grateful to the U.S. International Trade Administration and OTEXA for the help they have given us. We could have never done this on our own. For our small staff to have acquired the skills and opportunities to export on our own would have been nearly impossible. Mary Lynn Landgraf is amazing.

We are also deeply grateful to the US Department of Commerce and Oregon Biz Export for the assistance they have given to us.

Submitted by Ray Cotton, President and CEO

A recent shipment of FixnZips to a retail client

