

# Top Tips for businesses looking to engage with Asia

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## Find the right partner

Your first Asia contact, whether in New Zealand or Asia, previously known to you or brand new, may not be your right Asia business partner. Take time to establish the right relationship — this is fully in line with Asian culture, and will help to ensure your due diligence is robust. This is likely to require more than one visit to the Asian market you are focused on. There is sometimes a temptation to move quickly given the costs and time that travel requires, and the warm and generous manaakitanga / hospitality you are sure to receive. As a New Zealander resident in Asia for 30 years has remarked to us, don't leave your common sense on the plane when you fly to Asia. Suggesting your prospective partner also visits you could be another way to test their seriousness about your new relationship.

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## Ask around

Our research confirms the diversity of South Island business links with Asia. This means the chances are high that once you identify a new market, or strike problems in an existing one, someone in your city or region already has relevant experience. They needn't be in the same sector as you to be able to provide some great insights into the local culture and doing business on the ground. We've found that most New Zealand companies are generous in sharing this kind of information.

But how to find them? Regional chambers of commerce and economic development agencies (EDAs) in the South Island, our large banks and other professional service companies will all have a good idea of who is doing what across their members and customers. New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (see below) also works closely with a wide range of customers focused on Asia. A range of New Zealand-Asia business councils (based in the North Island but welcoming members from across Aotearoa) have a respective focus on China, Japan, India, South Korea and ASEAN markets. Local Asian business leaders also have deep knowledge of their home markets. All can help you to connect with Asia experience.

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## Consult the experts

According to survey responses, a high number of South Island companies found business partners and customers by participating in expos and trade shows. Could other methods be equally effective? New Zealand Trade and Enterprise advises New Zealander exporters on different ways to find their niche in Asia, and can identify potential investors and suppliers as well. Since the onset of COVID-19 they have expanded the number of customers they work with, and have established a comprehensive online platform to provide market intel and insights. If your last contact was some time ago, we recommend re-engaging.

Back home, chambers of commerce and ExportNZ are among those offering a range of training and market readiness workshops with an Asia focus. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade produces a range of high-quality market reports with input from diplomatic staff on the ground across the region.

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## Host an international intern

Many companies in our survey told us they would go to Asia to seek Asia knowledge. Let Asia come to you! South Island tertiary institutions tell us it can be difficult to find intern placements for their international students, including from Asia. We highly recommend giving this a try. Many Asian students arrive in New Zealand with significant professional experience in their home countries, and want to find ways to gain local experience and put their academic and business knowledge to work. Immigration regulations permit internships. This could be a great way to develop content for your e-commerce channel, translate an equipment manual in an Asian language, or just find out more about consumer tastes and preferences back home. Who knows, like many South Island companies, you might just find your specialist employee becomes indispensable.

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## Go local

The South Island is awash with other local talent as well. Asian language study at tertiary institutions is popular (particularly Chinese and Japanese), often combined with specialist business papers with an Asia focus. Young South Islanders are as adventurous as always, and may have travelled or lived in Asia with the support of the Prime Minister's Scholarships for Asia (PMSA), the Japanese Government's JET English teaching programme, or their own OE experiences teaching and working in markets like South Korea and Taiwan. Asia New Zealand Foundation interns also return from Asia with a solid working knowledge of local business culture and environment. COVID-19 has seen many young New Zealanders with solid Asia experience return home. Seek them out! Taking on a young engineer who also speaks an Asian language and has lived in one of your target markets can only bring upsides.

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## Keep in touch with us

**The Asia New Zealand Foundation equips businesses and businesspeople with the knowledge, networks and confidence to engage successfully with Asia. We offer paid business internships in Asia markets to tertiary graduates. We enable business leaders and thought leaders from Asia to inject inspiring Asia stories into New Zealand business sectors and conferences. We offer two-way entrepreneur exchanges between New Zealand and Southeast Asia. And our Leadership Network, our leadership development programme for emerging business and other leaders, equips New Zealanders with skills and connections they will use for a lifetime. Our business programme stand ready to talk to you about your Asia business interests at any time.**

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## Helpful links

As well as your local economic development agency (EDA) and chamber of commerce, the following organisations can provide you with additional Asia business information:

**Asia New Zealand Foundation**

[www.asianz.org.nz](http://www.asianz.org.nz)

**New Zealand Trade and Enterprise**

[www.nzte.govt.nz](http://www.nzte.govt.nz)

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

[www.mfat.govt.nz](http://www.mfat.govt.nz)

**ExportNZ**

[www.exportnz.org.nz](http://www.exportnz.org.nz)

**Centres of Asia Pacific Excellence**

[www.cape.org.nz](http://www.cape.org.nz)

**ASEAN-NZ Business Council**

[www.asean.org.nz](http://www.asean.org.nz)

**Japan New Zealand Business Council**

[www.jnzbc.com](http://www.jnzbc.com)

**India New Zealand Business Council**

[www.inzbc.org](http://www.inzbc.org)

**Korea New Zealand Business Council**

[www.knzbc.nz](http://www.knzbc.nz)

**New Zealand China Council**

[www.nzchinacouncil.org.nz](http://www.nzchinacouncil.org.nz)

**New Zealand China Trade Association**

[www.nzcta.org.nz](http://www.nzcta.org.nz)