

Listen to a radio programme in which people from three companies talk about their experiences of going global.

Optional exercise Listen to the programme and decide who mentions each point. (Answers below)

1. Going global changed the fortunes of which person?
 2. Which person changed their company's orientation?
 3. Which person has a changing workforce?
 4. Which person has changed their mind about going global?
 5. Which person has made the greatest use of new technology to go global?
 6. Which person is content not to change?
 7. Which person thinks they make the right product for a global market?
 8. Which person works for a family company?
 9. Which person's experience of going global began unexpectedly?
-

Going global: a solution for everyone?

Presenter: The much talked-about 'global market' is seen by nearly everyone in the business community today as being the *only* market. We know that advances in technology mean you could be offering your products and services to people in Brighton, Beijing or Buenos Aires at the same time.

But is it really that easy? And is it really the solution that everyone is looking for, or needs?

We talk to three very different companies about their very different experiences of trying to go global.

Nicola Melizzano of Caffè Perfetto:

NM: I didn't think it was for us at all...We're a small family company, founded by my grandfather. We produce small amounts of high-quality coffee, and supply mostly to bars – we don't do much in the way of direct retail at all.

P: Yet things changed very quickly for this small company after an unexpected offer.

NM: The local chamber of commerce had invited a group of Japanese investors to the area. They saw our factory, tasted our product – and wanted to buy as much of it as we could produce!

P: This was followed up by a trip to Japan.

NM: It was great, people loved our coffee –mostly (I think!) because of the retro 50s style packaging...! The Japanese contacts just grew and grew, and now we export all over south east Asia, and we're moving into China too. Two years ago, we didn't even have a website!

P: Nicola admits he's been in the right place at the right time.

NM: There's been a worldwide growth in coffee sales over the last ten years, it's a really fashionable thing to drink, all these coffee chains. Plus, coffee is something that's drunk all over the world, in pretty much every culture. I think luck helped us as much as the changing global situation.

P: 'Going global' happened in a completely different way for AKZ Engineering, a medium-sized company based in the English midlands. Derek Chalmers, their MD explains.

DC: In the mid-1990s things were looking bad for us. The global recession hit badly, many other firms round here were closing down or shipping out to China. We were forced to downsize, but then saw the changing situation as an opportunity, rather than a threat. We concentrated on our strengths – manufacturing small-size metal objects, anything from paper clips to staples up to parts for computers and televisions. Using web-technologies, we managed to expand our turnover by around 300%, and now we export to Europe principally, but also the Americas and south east Asia, even...

P: A success story, then. Our third guest, however, has a different story to tell...

HZ: I'm Heike Zweibel, and I design lighting systems – though I prefer to think of them as 'light sculptures.' They're more like art objects. Each one is built to order, depending on exactly what the client wants. I only employ one or two assistants, depending on how busy I am, because I prefer to do all the work myself. I'm not really interested in 'going global' – I have enough work for myself, I make enough money...I could expand, but wouldn't want to compromise the quality of the work.

P: So you'd never go global?

HZ: Well, no, I wouldn't say that exactly...I have a great website, and that leads to orders from the United States, or – more recently – Russia, a lot. I design, perhaps, two or three systems every year for overseas clients...so I don't really know if that counts as 'global' or not!

P: The advice, then, is to find the market that suits your company – whether it's on your doorstep, or the other side of the planet!

Answers: 1DC, 2DC, 3HZ, 4NM, 5DC, 6HZ, 7NM, 8NM, 9NM