

Cambridge Businesses Visit Asia Export Event

Specialist Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Commercial Officers from Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore and Taiwan visited Cambridge during September, providing an opportunity for local businesses to find out about the prospects for their company in one or more of these countries. The meeting was one of a series of business clinics that ICT officers are currently holding across the country.

Mike O'Malley, International Trade Advisor (Sector Specialist in ICT), who organised the event said: "The event in Cambridge was certainly one of the most successful we have organised so far. It provided a great opportunity for local businesses to get advice from commercial officers on how to enter specific markets, the type of distributors and business partners to target and research required before embarking on their export venture.

"The export requirements for every Asian country are wide ranging

- it is therefore really valuable for businesses to learn firsthand about how to prepare. More importantly the commercial officers enabled companies to realise whether they were truly ready to make inroads into their market of choice - in the long run potentially saving them time, money and resource."

"Over the past four years these events and advice sessions have resulted in participating companies generating new business in Asian markets. The feedback we therefore receive is always positive, as firms reap the rewards from the expert advice, which helps to move their business forward. With the success of the latest event I'm pleased to say we really are going from strength to strength."

Doing Business in Asia: Events will next be held in Bristol, 23rd Nov; Newcastle, 24th Nov; and Hinckley, 25th Nov. Cost £75.00 + VAT each event.

For booking information visit www.businessinasia.co.uk



ICT delegates at the Cambridge Asia Export Event

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Industry Reports

Recession effects: some companies see value decline

194 companies in the UK Scientific & Laboratory Equipment industry are worth a third less than they were a year ago in the clearest indication yet of the damage the recession has wreaked on the market. However, in a sign that the recovery is gaining traction, 332 companies in the market have actually increased in value, according to business analysts Plimsoll.

David Pattison, author of a special report valuing the top 678 companies in the market, describes how values are changing in the market: "It's certainly been a tough few years. Values have fallen markedly from their peak but the number of companies that are worth more this year than last is encouraging."

"In all we identified 332 companies that have increased in value - quite an achievement considering current market conditions. Their performance adds to the growing belief that the market has stabilised and companies with their house in order can once again prosper and add value."

However, as with all recoveries there are those that struggle to recover as Pattison points out: "194 other companies have lost a third of their value in the latest year. They have such a lot of ground to make up and many are in such dire straits it's unlikely they will return to their former glory. The post recession market is so highly competitive I would expect a number of these companies to be bought out on the cheap or decline further and eventually be wound up."

The new Plimsoll Analysis - Scientific & Laboratory Equipment will tell you instantly which companies are prospering in the post recession market place, those set to be bought out and those heading for trouble - across the whole of the market and in the individual regions.

It gives an instant performance rating on 678 companies and highlights those ripe for acquisition. Each company is also valued to show the affect the recession has had on their worth and whether they are emerging or still bogged down.

Readers of International Labmate are entitled to a £50 discount of this new special edition of the Plimsoll Industry Analysis - Scientific & Laboratory Equipment. Call 01642 626400 for further details and quote reference PR/PC40.

With public and private sector organisations clamouring to form new Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), the **Forum of Private Business** is arguing that the new bodies should focus on providing training as well as guidance on the support that businesses really need.

LEPs are being introduced following the demise of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and local Business Link services. Tasked with fostering economic growth, more than 50 bids have been tabled by collaborations of councils, city regions and business leaders. However, the way LEPs will operate - and how they will be funded - is far from clear.

In its consultation response on LEPs, submitted to the Government, the Forum indicated that the services provided by bidding authorities should include:

Localised business support

- Supplier matching and inward investment
- Export preparations
- Regional infrastructure investment
- Skills and training information and promotion

Criticisms levelled at the proposed bodies include that, because there are so many bids, they could be too small to be effective, that they could be too parochial or even toothless 'talking shops'.

"It is right that LEPs should be chaired by a prominent business leader, and that there should be cooperation between the public and private sectors. However, independence is key when it comes to delivering information, advice and guidance about the help that is already easily available to business owners through dedicated support organisations in the private sector," said the Forum's Chief Executive Phil Orford.

"The focus should be on allowing businesses to choose their own forms of business support from a fair and open marketplace, rather than competing to sell them services through a system which would be devoid of choice. Independent organisations like the Forum, which have to delight their customers simply in order to survive, are already out there, ready and willing to provide a complete range of business support services to small and medium-sized enterprises."

Whether it is dealing with banks, utilities companies or local authorities, many small firms believe they are paying more for reduced services. This is why the Forum believes it is important that LEPs engage properly with these businesses in providing the level of support to justify any increases in local taxation.

In addition to their function of fostering economic growth and providing local infrastructure improvements, many smaller employers want training to be one of the main remits of LEPs.

Further information on The Forum's new Training and Skills member panel survey which highlights elements of business

support they would like LEPs to deliver, can be accessed at <http://www.fpb.org/newsarchive>

The BioIndustry Association (BIA) called on government last month to take urgent action to stimulate greater investment into life sciences companies. In its submission to the government consultation on 'Financing a Private Sector Recovery' the BIA proposed that existing fiscal schemes are improved in order to enhance the investment proposition for potential investors into the sector. The BIA urged Ministers to address the specific challenges facing industries such as the life sciences, where strategic government support can play a key role in leveraging private sector investment.

The BIA highlighted a number of solutions to unlocking access to finance:

- Changes to the Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS) and Venture Capital Trusts (VCTs), as recommended by Sir James Dyson in his recent report, would help to generate more private investment in life sciences companies and would encourage more activity in the market place in terms of shareholder-to-shareholder transactions.
- Changes to schemes such as R&D Tax Credits and Consortium Relief, as well as the introduction of the 'Patent Box' mechanism, are needed to ensure that life sciences companies can access finance and grow their businesses for the future.
- The UK Innovation Investment Fund must play a central role in improving access to finance for life sciences companies by providing follow on investment in early stage enterprises.

Nigel Gaymond, BIA Chief Executive, said: "The government is right to look at how it can work with industry to help foster a private sector recovery, and developing the huge potential of Britain's life sciences sector must be a central part of this. The BIA's vision is clear - we want to see a thriving global UK life sciences hub competing for investment in R&D with Boston, San Diego, and Singapore, rebalancing our economy away from financial services and making the most of Britain's fantastic research base. If we are to achieve this we must address the problem of access to finance, with government-backed measures helping to unlock the sustainable growth and jobs that the life sciences can deliver."

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