



## CONFERENCE NOTES

### **iPoliticsLIVE: Global trade complexities - unscrambling opportunities**

**Moderator:** Susan Delacourt

**Panelists:**

- Corinne Pohlmann
- Andrea Stairs
- Leroy Lowe, CITP
- Carl Burlock

**Further Resources:**

[Watch the Facebook Live session here!](#)

EDC [Global Export Forecast](#)

**Andrea:**

- The power of trade can stabilize small businesses
- Impact – can double size of domestic business by tapping into international markets
- Things as basic as tracking become major factors on businesses ability to compete on the world stage
- No longer need to be in a large population centre as an international business

**Carl:**

- Global supply chains have changed - now more regional centres
- No doubt that Canadian cos will continue to have opps in US and Mexico, CETA, South America
- Companies that export are more resilience. Spend more on R&D, bring in higher revenues.
- SMEs the biggest job growth in Canada – need to get more involved in exporting

**Leroy:**

- Canada has tremendous advantage in international business training (world class)
- Industry-informed training (FITT) these practical skills become fundamental for small biz
- Businesses are looking to new grads to bring in new skills – digital divide

- There is a gap between how fast tech changes and curriculums are modernized – colleges are playing catch-up
- Canada has never been richer for resources
- Trade promotion and services need to be better informed on resource network to inform their clients (smes)

#### **Corinne:**

- Small businesses have not always been part of the trade conversation
- With tech a lot more can be done
- 90% of those that trade are SMEs
- Currency fluctuation – govs can give guidance and support
- FTAs motivate SMEs to trade
- NAFTA – 1/3 of SMEs considering other plans

#### **What are important things that SMES want to see in FTAs?**

- A chapter on SMEs (there will be in new NAFTA) will provide opps for smes to participate in ways they haven't been able to before
- Reduction in duties
- Regulation at provincial levels
- Rules of origin
- Border processes

#### **Trade Facilitation programs**

- How can they be better tailored for smes
- Labour mobility – what are the rules?
- How can we modernize NAFTA? Making sure both domestic and international companies benefit and aren't hurt by it

#### **Are you hopeful about trade in the Trump Era?**

- Unanimously yes
- However there will be repercussions to businesses when trade wars break out (tariffs) but prospects of this are quite low
- Small biz optimism – Canadian retail SMEs are more optimistic than last year – most optimistic are those engaged in trade

#### **Will proposed tax changes to independent corporations change interest to grow trade?**

- Small business owners are very passionate about concerns to new tax proposals
- Optimism is going down from tax uncertainty but also trade policy, etc.
- Could potentially impact SMEs decision to go international

### **What resources does Ebay offer to help navigate global landscape?**

- Ebay does it for you. Our whole role is to mediate transactions
- Often used as a testing platform, way to learn (pricing, etc)
- Way to first reach clients before migrating to more profitable platform

### **Should there be retail tax to online shopping to convert to grants for physical retailers?**

- Online products become cheaper due to [de minimus](#)
- Brick and mortar retailers aren't viable anymore – just part of the process
- Need to level playing field in tax payment between online and physical retailers

[TAP – bootcamp for exporters](#) is a great tool for SMEs

### **Should there be tax incentives for businesses to expand globally?**

- Not necessary, businesses just want level playing fields
- There are already tremendous opportunities for businesses to go global
- Canada needs to get better at storytelling, talk about more success stories rather than going back to same few

### **How can SMEs use online tools to go global?**

**Andrea:** You can use existing platforms like eBay to do so easily with little investment

**Leroy:** Cost never been lower, if you're thinking about it just do it. Costs are now dirt cheap to develop your own, easy to have website and use social media to drive traffic. But your team will need new skills – make that investment and know it will pay off.

Having a website doesn't change that there are still legal, shipping, IP, other risks so you have to invest in training to understand the nuances. Knowing nothing in global markets leads to disaster.

### **What about bigger companies?**

So many small companies are involved in the supply chains of bigger ones. Large companies will continue to have major roles and existing agreements still tend to cater most to them.

SMEs should hire people who have already been involved in exporting at large companies to have their vision, network.

## How can we get all the organizations working together?

**Leroy:** Atlantic Canada has everyone coming to table with the private sector to talk. It's still a work in progress, but we are trying to collaborate and just need to keep it up.

**Corinne:** SME owners are looking at borders first, CBSA is not equipped to provide info but is often first to be contacted, could they be the gateway?

**Carl:** More collaboration is needed between agencies.

**Andrea:** We need to go from program-focused to customer-focused. How can we respond to their needs and actions?

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