

Local companies find opportunities in exporting, thanks to program

By Morgan McKay - MTN News

(for video of story visit <http://www.kbzk.com/story/31057832/local-companies-find-opportunities-in-exporting-thanks-to-program>)

BOZEMAN - For small businesses in Montana, opportunities can be hard to find.

But now, there is one program called Expotech that helps small companies determine if they are ready to expand and grow.

"Ninety percent of the world's population is outside the U.S.," said Jenni West, with Montana Manufacturing Extension Center. "And 75 percent of the buying power is outside of the U.S."

With so many more people outside of the United States, exporting can be a huge opportunity for many small businesses.

"There is a limited market here in Montana and these small companies have a great opportunity to look outside not only the state's borders but the national borders to find opportunities for their companies to grow," said West.

Expotech is a nationally ranked nine week program that works with around five companies to help them grow and expand outside the US

"People are intimidated by export, but really when you bring all the knowledge together like this program does to teach them what they might need to be concerned about, what the challenges are," said West.

The program not only helps businesses determine if they're ready to export their products, but also put into writing their plan.

"I think the biggest thing I'm taking out of this is, I sat down and I put my plan in place instead of having it just kind of roll around in my head, now I have it on paper and it's firm and we have road map to follow," said Olivelle Co-Founder Brie Thompson.

Olivelle is one of the companies that participated in this program.

"Our business has been growing substantially domestically for the last few years and we're starting to get a lot of interest from Canada," said Thompson. "And so we found that it was a necessary step for us to put a plan in place so that we could make our investments worth their value."

This program not only educates companies on the logistics of exporting their products, but connects them to valuable resources.

Thompson: It's been absolutely phenomenal so far. I've learned about all the state resources that we have for kind of helping us put those plans together and making sure that we're being smart and we're making the right move and doing things right.

There were five companies from all around Montana that graduated from the program and will continue to look into exporting their products in the future.



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