



International trade standards and why they are important for MSMEs

Opinion of: Lisa McAuley, CEO of the Global Trade Professionals Alliance (GTPA)

Standards are the key to consistency in business. They set out the processes, procedures and frameworks to ensure that products, services, processes and people meet a qualified set of expectations. Standards streamline and systematise complexity to provide a level of trust in the best means to achieving an outcome, a capability, a competency or an output.

Standards do far more than just help you comply with the relevant rules and regulations. They play a crucial role in facilitating international trade, supporting businesses into export markets by lowering barriers to trade.

Regulators often count on standards as a means to verify outcomes, capabilities or outputs. For businesses, especially micro, small or medium enterprises (MSMEs), adhering to international trade standards can reduce the cost and risk of doing business while also providing an opportunity to increase productivity, build supplier trust, increase customer confidence and access new market opportunities.

These are all achieved through ensuring consistency, minimising non-conformance and establishing frameworks to deliver expectations. Standards work to achieve 'The best way of doing something'.

For most businesses, navigating the complexity of doing business globally and maintaining a competitive edge requires the ongoing development of new skills and knowledge. Many businesses are time poor and don't have the breadth of staffing to build and maintain all the necessary skills.

MSMEs are often established by entrepreneurs and led by owner-managers who may possess certain specialised skillsets that underpin the value proposition of the business, but who often lack various management competencies such as financial literacy, business development skills and the core capabilities relating to global trade development. As such they need to draw on a trusted network of skilled professionals and consulting services with the required competencies to support growth in their business.

Certifying adherence to international trade standards is the most effective means to providing a network of trusted trade professionals and specialist consulting services to facilitate a businesses' international expansion much earlier in their operations. It is increasingly common today for a start-up to "go international" on day one of operations, whether through online channels, on the basis of unsolicited orders, or as part of a conscious management decision. Opportunity abounds, but at the same time the luxury of honing competencies and dealing with risk in a familiar domestic market is no longer a given.

It is imperative that businesses not only have access to the right competencies but the support of an ecosystem to assist them to take advantage of new international opportunities. Global



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ISO/IEC standards can provide the underlying trust mechanism and be harnessed to facilitate and break down barriers to trade.

MSME Day is an ideal opportunity to recognise the important contribution these businesses make to the global economy. At GTPA, we are proud to leverage our work in standards and capacity building to support MSME business owners and entrepreneurs gain the competencies they require to achieve international success through recognised international pathways.

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About the Global Trade Professionals Alliance

The Global Trade Professionals Alliance (GTPA) is a global trade organisation dedicated to the development of international standards to harmonise and facilitate inclusive and trusted trade. GTPA supports businesses, governments, trade professionals, trade organisations and industry bodies to build competency and proficiency in the conduct of international trade; create and facilitate global business networks to advance international trading opportunities and establish a trusted international trading environment reinforced by ISO standards.