

Going Global – Rowan University

"It could be very challenging for a New Jersey exporter to gather the meaningful data identifying international partners and markets that is so essential to their success on their own. This task could get quite easy with the support and help of the staff at the U.S. Commercial Service," said Gokhan Alkanat during a recent conversation about doing business abroad.

Alkanat is the Associate Provost for International Education at Rowan University. As the chief international officer at the university, Alkanat oversees International Student and Scholar Services, Education Abroad, and English Language Program. As such, he is well versed in the challenges and opportunities of exporting educational services.

Much like those New Jersey businesses that are engaged in exporting products, service providers are also seeking key contacts and resources overseas. Gokhan and his colleagues agree that the vast connections that NJ District Export Council (NJDEC) and U.S. Commercial Service (USCS) nurture overseas are useful for addressing academic issues as well as supporting the school's business needs through introductions to critical contacts.

What stood out in this discussion was the incredible level of trust that Susan Widmer, Executive Secretary NJDEC and Director USCS, and her staff, have fostered with their members and clients. Their ability to tap into a thoughtfully curated network has enabled them to make meaningful introductions and ensure successful meetings for their New Jersey exporters. Using a thorough vetting process, they are able to share contacts who have been carefully authenticated, bringing a wide range of intelligence data to the United States exporters while also facilitating meaningful partnerships in far off places that would be impossible to forge without local contacts.

After working together for more than a decade, resulting in multiple interactions leveraging their Gold Key Service to arrange matchmaking appointments, Gokhan spoke gratefully of the U. S. Commercial Service's positive impact on Rowan's international endeavors. Without their support and assurance, making international connections could be a very risky business. Instead of gambling on a trip to unknown areas and scheduling meetings with unfamiliar professionals, the staff does everything it can to provide clients with a full report, including insider perspectives and realistic guidance *before* the trip begins. The staff works quickly, even when fulfilling last minute requests, and their due diligence pays off. Armed with knowledge about the social, cultural, political and educational landscape in each country they visit, Rowan's international group can be much more effective and efficient when determining what markets will be best suited for their academic strategy and growing their global student body.

In return for the much-appreciated assistance provided by the NJDEC and USCS, Gokhan is proud to say that the university also gives back - as well as receives - support. One common example occurs when other U.S. universities that are in need of guidance on international education reach out to Rowan, an NJDEC member. In this way, they are able to return the favor to others seeking new markets!

Alkanat summed it up this way: "To accomplish our international goals, we need access to substantial resources outside of the United States. Through the U. S. Department of Commerce, Commercial Service, we are able to make the appropriate connections, form meaningful relationships, have access to accurate and substantiated data, and be confident that our international network is solid."