

UK skincare business celebrates US export growth with Coast to Coast



Somersets, a shaving products manufacturer based in Henley-on-Thames, has reported a 25-fold increase in its exports to the US in just three years, climbing from US \$20,000 (£13,000) in 2012 to over US \$500,000 (£330,000) of North American sales in 2014.

The company, which manufactures shaving oils using natural plant-based ingredients, was established in 1991 but began exporting to the US in 2012 and has grown its transatlantic business with a strategy of supplying a network of retailers across the US as well as serving American customers directly via its US website.

Eileen Bevens, Somersets' sales and marketing director in the US, said: "We are really proud of how we have grown our business in the States. We started out using a warehouse in the Mid West but soon realised that we would benefit from having a fulfillment and distribution partner that was based on the East Coast, which is close to our own US office and also makes the whole process of exporting goods from the UK more straightforward. That was a real game changer and we haven't looked back since then."

For the past two years the company has used American distribution specialist Coast to Coast Fulfillment, based in Rhode Island between Boston and New York, to warehouse and distribute its products to a network of pharmacies and supermarkets across the US. The company now picks, packs and ships thousands of units each week to US retailers including the Meijer hypermarket chain, and pharmacy giant Walgreens, which has over 8,000 stores in all 50 states. Jeff Wyant, director of Coast to Coast Fulfillment, said: "Somersets is a great British business that has created a fantastic product in their shaving oils, and the brand taps into the US passion for English heritage. Growing sales over here from \$20,000 to over half a million



Somersets - moving things on with Coast to Coast

in just three years is a real achievement and we are working to help Somersets grow their sales further next year."

"We soon realised that we would benefit from having a fulfillment and distribution partner that was based on the East Coast."

For Somersets, Coast to Coast's services include logging onto Walgreens' web portal to download labels and send out advance shipping notifications; as well as shipping the product to a variety of wholesales customers across several niches within the health and beauty care industry.

"The wholesale niches are quite distinct in the US market," explained Mr Wyant. "For example, United Natural Foods distributes natural and organic foods and products, often to stores specialising only in those types of products, while American Sales Company (ASN) mostly distributes health and beauty-care items."

He added: "Somersets' products overlap the two niches, but they are separate in terms of how the distribution channels work.

ASN is also the only wholesale buyer for Somersets that uses EDI protocols for its orders, so their data processing needs are very different than for other wholesale buyers. For Walgreens, we ship to their distribution centres for their bricks and mortar stores, but we also ship to their subsidiary, Drugstore.com, which then delivers products directly to their web customers."

Mr Wyant concluded: "We get a great deal of satisfaction from helping British firms to export to the USA, especially when they need to navigate the complex, variable supply-chain requirements of national retailers. The market potential here for British firms is huge, and we are seeing increasing enquiries from UK businesses that are ambitious and want to gain a foothold in the US market, just as Somersets has done so successfully," he added.

Ms Bevens added: "Even with a fantastic product, the key to succeeding in the US is ensuring you have a fulfillment partner with experience of supporting UK businesses through the whole process of shipping to the US. Coast to Coast are able to fulfil and distribute our products to national retailers at short notice, helping us to realise our growth plans for the business in the USA."