

European Skills for International Trade & Logistics

Job Profile

International Trade Operational Manager

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1 Job definition

The International Trade Operational Manager works in the international trade sector and contributes to the sustainable international development of the organisation through:

- international trade missions such as market research, prospection, marketing of goods and services, and negotiation process
- environmentally friendly optimisation of purchases through ethical and fair behaviour
- administrative missions such as implementation and monitoring of international operations
- use of digital processes and tools
- permanent concern for sustainability and environmental impact of decisions and actions

He/she processes information for the market information system to be used in commercial decisions in accordance with the organisation's international marketing-mix. He/she takes part in the commercial negotiation by supporting the process related to the international trade contract. He/she coordinates import and export activities and the operations between the different services of the organisation and/or external partners. He/she develops the commercial relationship in an intercultural environment.

To succeed in his/her job, the International Trade Operational Manager is required to have transversal competences: he/she must be flexible and autonomous. Concerning the use of languages, he/she must have a good command of the language(s) used in the working environment and of English, as well as, if possible, other foreign languages. He/she must also have a sound knowledge of the economic, legal and professional environment.

2 Types of organisations

The following types of organisations require the services of an International Trade Operational Manager:

- Export companies of goods and services
- Franchise distributors
- Subsidiaries
- Importers
- Importing, exporting and distributing-marketing companies
- Transport providers, consignment companies, freight forwarding agencies, shippers, carriers, packers, customs agencies...
- Commercial agencies
- Banks
- Chambers of commerce
- International trade fairs organisers
- International and national development boards
- Commercial and legal advice companies
- Insurers
- Associations, institutions, and non-governmental organisations
- Certification and quality control bodies

3 Position and role

The position and the role of the International Trade Operational Manager varies significantly depending on the size and objectives of the employer organisation. Generally, he/she will have more responsibilities in a small organisation than in a big group.

The position depends on the work experience – nationally or abroad, full-time or part-time work, and the type of department attachment (international sales / international marketing / international sales administration / logistics...).

Depending on the size of the organisation, the International Trade Operational Manager has various tasks and responsibilities such as managing export and import operations or adapting the service to current trade regulations according to the needs and expectations of customers and the organisation's objectives.

Concerning hierarchy, in an SME the International Trade Operational Manager reports directly to the organisation manager or, in case there is one, to the international manager. In a larger organisation, he/she may report to the import-export operations manager.

The job titles and positions within the organisation can vary significantly with regards to the professional experience and the size of the organisation.

3.1 Young graduates on a first professional experience:

- Market research assistant
- Import/Export assistant
- Commercial import assistant
- Purchase assistant
- Customer service assistant
- Digital marketing assistant
- International digital marketing assistant
- International marketing assistant
- International sales assistant
- Logistics and customer service assistant
- Logistics assistant
- Assistant in the department of international commercial operations
- International trade administration assistant
- Technician in the international trade administration.
- After-sales administration assistant
- Customs assistant / customs operator / customs agent / customs representative
- Export sales administration assistant
- International payment assistant
- International trade fairs organiser
- International and national development boards assistant

3.2 After some years of work experience:

- Export customer service coordinator
- Export sales administrator
- Export sales manager
- Import purchasing manager
- International manager
- International marketing manager
- Export sales administration manager
- Order process management specialist
- International sales operations manager

4 Economic, technological, and social environment and perspectives

Technological innovations, changing lifestyles, an increasingly competitive environment as well as new regulations and environmental policies have transformed the international trade (IT) sector in recent years. New technologies have a great impact on international trade operational managers. The integration of information technology concepts (e.g., blockchain, artificial intelligence, automation, robotisation, 5G, etc.) and the increasing use of digital tools (e.g., tracking and tracing of operations at any time during all the sales process, dematerialised procedures, etc.) are profoundly transforming the sector's jobs. In the coming years, international trade operational managers will have to deal with more and more automated procedures and new ways of trade organisation (e.g., the documentary chain, the organisation and securement of international payments and trade finance or the use of social networks), which will not only influence the organisation of operational marketing but also the way of managing the sales activity. Particularly in international trade, video-conferencing tools than can be used anywhere, just like trade shows and fairs in a digital version, are changing the way we sell and buy. This fast evolution and permanent flow of information heavily impact the job and require agile data management.

The international trade sector has grown significantly during the last years. International trade companies operate in globalised markets and request for international strategies. At the same time, the trend towards more sustainable consumption increases the importance of local and inter-regional markets. New consumer trends and the rise of online trade (e-commerce) strongly influence the overall supply chain and finance trade activities, such as "smart contracts".

Customers' expectations are growing regarding delivery times, prices, tailor-made services, and environmentally friendly solutions. In addition, the competition in the sector is intensifying due to new and global actors. International trade companies therefore need to adopt a forward-looking approach to adapt both to changing regulations and market expectations. The monitoring of international trade news and innovations, the search for innovative B-to-B and B-to-C marketing & sales solutions, and the need to rethink sales organisations and schemes have a considerable impact on the conditions under which the profession is performed and will develop during the coming years. As a result, the creation of collaborative platforms and partnerships among international trade companies can be considered with the aim to stay competitive, to propose client-oriented services and to reach quality expectations and certifications.

The growing awareness of the dangers of climate change among citizens and the economic world is leading to a greater attention for environmental matters. Global political agendas converge towards 2030 and beyond to decrease the environmental impact of the economy and industry (e.g., the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015). According to the European Commission, transport causes almost a quarter of Europe's greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and is the main cause of air pollution in cities. International trade uses global transport solutions and is closely linked to and dependent on international transport evolution and its globalisation.

In this context, new legal and administrative regulations are adopted. Consequently, sustainable approaches must increasingly be integrated into the development model of international trade companies. The trend goes towards the development and implementation of corporate social responsibility activities. Companies must incorporate ethical awareness and human rights respect, fair negotiation, equity and diversity. International trade companies are also seeking to improve their image with their customers, and these actions are becoming an element in their sales pitch.

5 Activities and tasks

□ Activity 1: Business monitoring

A1T1 Permanent market monitoring desk

A1T2 Collecting information abroad

A1T3 Preparing decision making

<p>Working context and professional duties</p> <p>The International Trade Operational Manager defines the levels and sources of information that are necessary for the organisation's market information system (SIM) and its decision-making. He/she exploits opportunities from internal and external markets.</p> <p>He/she collects and analyses information, coming from different internal and external sources, in a systematic and regular manner, regarding products and services, suppliers, services providers, company competition and other framework factors relevant to the organisation's internationalisation policy. He/she knows how to exploit the business intelligence, its general concept, software and end applications.</p> <p>He/she informs the organisation's decision-making process by preparing commercial reports and drawing conclusions, within a deadline, through the collection and statistical analysis of information from available sources, including the Marketing Information System.</p> <p>He/she identifies and lists deployment models on a target market. Foreign language skills are required.</p> <p>He/she reports to the manager, who will decide on the level of autonomy for which he/she will be held accountable. The organisation's size is an important factor in establishing the degree of responsibility.</p>		
<p>Relevant information to work</p>	<p>Equipment needed for assignments</p>	<p>Professional contacts</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professional context - Information and projects about European and international institutions (EU, WTO, ASEAN...) - Socio-cultural information and professional codes of conduct of the target country - Legal, economic, and commercial information - Information for the application of the international marketing-mix policies - Specialised press; access to the DG Trade website - Information about customers, suppliers or services providers, commercial reports - Relevant information for dealing with malfunctions and/or complaints - Organisation's sustainable development goals - Organisation's CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and ESG (Environmental Social Governance) criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information and communications technology (ICT) equipment - Survey-processing software and applications - Working protocol for database - Templates for reports - Database for customers, suppliers, service providers - Internet, intranet, extranet - Dashboards and management data - Collaborative tools; software and hardware webinars - Fixed and mobile terminals - Sales collaborative and communication tools - Software suites (ERP, CRM, etc.) 	<p><u>Internal</u></p> <p>He/she is in contact with marketing, legal, financial and accounts, logistics, quality and production departments or staff.</p> <p><u>External</u></p> <p>He/she is in direct contact with customers, suppliers, sub-contractors and government and local authority agencies, at national or international level.</p>
<p>Expected results</p> <p>Respect of the timetable and list of priorities.</p> <p>Relevant, reliable and up to date market information.</p> <p>Optimal, updated information about international trade and opportunities collected abroad.</p> <p>Respect of allocated time and budget.</p> <p>Updating and feeding of business information onto databases</p> <p>Accurate recommendations for decision makers regarding business market opportunities and threats.</p> <p>Accurate recommendations enabling possible improvements of procedures.</p>		

□ **Activity 2: Export selling**

A2T1 *Prospecting for elaborating adapted offers (pre-sales activities)*

A2T2 *Supporting the selling negotiations and selling*

A2T3 *Following up sales*

<p><u>Working context and professional duties</u></p> <p>He/she identifies potential clients in accordance with established criteria to achieve the organisation’s commercial objectives. He/she is involved in export marketing by prospecting and drafting commercial offers or responding to calls for tender, and contacts customers according to the procedures established, taking into account the characteristics of the country /culture, for the development of commercial activity. He/she organises and supervises communication / promotion actions of products / services at international fairs and events, optimizing the resources assigned to adapt their results to the established objectives. He/she contributes to the adaptation of procedures related to the international development of the organisation.</p> <p>He/she participates in certain aspects of the negotiation of the international sales transaction, assisting in the negotiation and execution processes of the international sale of products and services. He/she must also ensure the following up sales, controlling the development and evolution of sales of the products/services in international markets, checking that the conditions agreed with the clients or distributors are met to achieve the planned objectives. He/she defines, develops and carries out marketing measures. He/she makes the selection of suitable instruments of the marketing mix: customer questionings, advertisements..., as well as the marketing plan and the marketing action. He/she implements e-commerce strategy with digital marketing tools, exploiting social networks. Foreign language skills are required.</p> <p>He/she may be led to suggest improvements and to participate in the design of the export sales administration.</p> <p>The International Trade Operational Manager reports to his/her manager, who will decide on the level of autonomy for which he/she will be held accountable. Organisation size is an important factor in establishing the degree of responsibility.</p>		
<p>Relevant information to work</p>	<p>Equipment needed for assignments</p>	<p>Professional contacts</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multicultural ethical and cultural information - Prospecting targets and tools - Selling plan / strategy - Customers, prospects database - Prospecting action plan; budget - Legislation and regulation constraints - Tariffs and billing conditions of the organisation - General selling conditions - Templates of contracts, commercial contracts, contracts with service providers - Quality indicators - Professional media - National and International warranty regulations - Organisation’s sustainable development goals - Organisation’s CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and ESG (Environmental Social Governance) criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information and communications technology (ICT) - Fixed and mobile terminals - Database of customers, suppliers, service providers - Internet, intranet, extranet - Dashboards and management data - Collaborative tools; webinars - Sales communication tools - Software suites (ERP, CRM, etc.) 	<p><u>Internal</u></p> <p>He/she is in contact with marketing, legal, purchasing, financial and accounts, logistics, quality and production departments or staff.</p> <p><u>External</u></p> <p>He/she is in contact with other companies and/or sub-contractors as part of a national and/or international system.</p> <p>He/she is in contact with public services, the government and/or local authorities, at national or international level.</p>
<p><u>Expected results</u></p> <p>Production of an appropriate, detailed and updated file of prospects.</p> <p>Prospection plan.</p> <p>An organised and effective prospect-targeted communication plan.</p> <p>Customer-targeted offers. Following-up and processing of orders.</p> <p>Mastered piloting of the negotiation interviews. Accurate contract formalizing agreements.</p> <p>Effective maintenance of an updated file and business information service.</p> <p>Optimal complaints, incidents and conflict resolution process.</p> <p>Settlement of warranty claims.</p> <p>Suggestion of accurate quality and results indicators for decision making.</p> <p>Recommendations towards possible improvement of procedures.</p>		

□ **Activity 3: Import buying**

A3T1 *Preparing the import activities (supplier database)*

A3T2 *Supporting the buying negotiations*

A3T3 *Following up the import buying activities*

Working context and professional duties

He/she prepares the import activities and creates and updates a potential suppliers database.

He/she identifies and selects potential suppliers in accordance with established criteria to achieve the organisation's commercial objectives while respecting the environment through ethical and fair behaviour, and identifying and avoiding human rights risks along the supply chain and in subsidiaries.

He/she contacts suppliers according to the procedures established, considering the characteristics of the country/culture in question for the development of buying activity.

He/she supports the buying negotiations, elaborating and disseminating tenders, and analysing offers received.

He/she optimises preparation of the buying meeting and informs the decision-making process for the choice of suppliers.

He/she ensures the following up of the import buying activities and the effective achievement and coordination of the buying orders.

He/she handles conflicts and litigations, evaluates the effectiveness of the supplier's service and updates information in the suppliers database.

He/she develops lasting relations through direct contact with an appropriate range of partners and service suppliers in a highly competitive environment. Foreign language skills are required.

He/she may be led to suggest improvements and to participate in the evaluation of the buying process.

The International Trade Operational Manager reports to his/her manager, who determines the level of autonomy for which he/she will be accountable. Organisation size is an important factor in defining his/her remit and the extent of his/her responsibility.

Relevant information to work	Equipment needed for assignments	Professional contacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sourcing websites - Market regulations (customs; standards) - Methods of selection, - Database of referenced suppliers, service providers, sub-contractors - Specifications of the buying offer - Price lists - General buying conditions - Insurance contracts - Business and cultural information on source countries - Performance indicators - Buying contracts models - Methods for scoring, validating and choosing suppliers - Negotiation buying methods - Ethical and quality charter - Organisation's sustainable development goals - Organisation's CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and ESG (Environmental Social Governance) criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supplier Management Software - Planning & management software - Internet, intranet, extranet - Fixed and mobile terminals - Collaborative tools; webinars - Software suites (ERP, CRM, etc.) 	<p><u>Internal</u> He/she is in contact with marketing, legal, sales, account, logistics, quality and production departments or staff.</p> <p><u>External</u> He/she is in direct contact with partners (prospects, suppliers, sub-contractors, insurers, etc.), customs and customers, at national or international level.</p>

Expected results

Identification and accurate selection of providers / sub-contractors

Creation of potential suppliers database.

Update the database information

Elaboration and dissemination of tenders.

Analysis of offers received.

Information of the decision-making process. Optimal preparation of the buying meeting.

Optimal handling of litigations; processing an optimal resolution of complaints, incidents and conflicts.

Elaboration of activity reports.

Accurate recommendations enabling a possible improvement of procedures.

□ **Activity 4: Coordination of processes for import buying and export selling**

A4T1 *Choosing service providers (insurance, logistics, financing...)*

A4T2 *Ensuring administration of operations*

Working context and professional duties

The International Trade Operational Manager carries out the administrative tasks related to international trade operations in compliance with the organisation’s procedures. He / she identifies potential providers (insurance, logistics, financing ...), asks for offers and evaluates them. He / she organises the tasks, including the documentary chain, according to regulations in force, controlling them and keeping the clients informed about the progress of their order to meet their expectations and preserve their satisfaction. He / she assesses supplier performance and manages claims, disputes, and their coverage. He / she designs and analyses dashboards for monitoring operations management. He / she must ensure the use of ethical and loyal business practices, considering ecological aspects and sustainability to the organisation, the customers and the suppliers.

He/she reports to the operations, branch, or department manager, who will decide on the level of autonomy for which he/she will be held accountable. Organisation size is an important factor in establishing the degree of responsibility.

Relevant information to work	Equipment needed for assignments	Professional contacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administration procedures for import or export operations (logistics, customs regulations...) - The organisation’s KPIs and economic constraints - Ethical and quality charter - Choices of the organisation concerning insurance, transports, forwarding agent, financing, banking - Current standards and regulation; customs - Organisation’s sustainable development goals - Organisation’s CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and ESG (Environmental Social Governance) criteria - Main commercial contract and documentary transaction files - Offers from service providers - Procedures for managing and solving setbacks - Quality procedures according to possible certification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fix and mobile terminals - Websites on regulations specific to customs - Supply chain management software - Internet / Intranet / Extranet - Collaborative tools - Business and administration software - Administrative tasks tutorials 	<p><u>Internal</u> He/she is in contact with production, logistic, sales and purchasing, quality, and account services or staff.</p> <p><u>External</u> He/she is in contact with customers, providers, insurers, banks, transportation providers, forwarding-agents, customs, certifying bodies, public services, and the Government and/or local authorities, at national or international level.</p>

Expected results

- Selection of appropriate and reliable service providers for all outsourced operations.
- Optimal follow-up of the service providers’ activities, meeting the customer’s expectations with efficiency / profitability
- Efficient, effective, up to date and traceable administration of the buying and selling activities
- Efficient management of activities, partners and working processes complying with the most recent quality criteria and international standards
- Recommendations towards a possible improvement of procedures; proposals for dealing with complaints and disputes
- Compliance with environmental and ethical standards.

□ **Activity 5: Management of relations in different cultures**

A5T1 *Communicating in an intercultural environment in a foreign language*

A5T2 *Implementation of the commercial relationship in an intercultural environment inside and outside EU*

<p><u>Working context and professional duties</u></p> <p>In every commercial and operational activity that the International Trade Operational Manager must provide, he / she needs a persuasive communication in the national language and in foreign languages, English being mandatory.</p> <p>The International Trade Operational Manager must communicate orally fluently and spontaneously in the national language and in English and / or another language in order to identify the customers' needs and guarantee the service, carry out advisory activities, attention and resolution of possible conflicts and incidents.</p> <p>He / she must communicate in writing in any support in a coherent way, showing autonomy to generate professional documentation.</p> <p>He / she needs to build and maintain a multi-cultural network of contacts that he/she needs to manage flexibly according to a variety of situations.</p> <p>The level of autonomy and responsibility will depend on the organisation size.</p>		
Relevant information to work	Equipment needed for assignments	Professional contacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Network database (organisations, partners, staff) - Communication techniques in a multicultural context and in foreign languages - Cultural codes for professional communication and models of professional practices - Organisation and partners' communication protocols - Precise description of the relationship (aims, human and material means) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fix and mobile terminals - Translation websites to facilitate communication - Websites to deepen foreign languages learning - Webinars of private or public organisations on different cultures and foreign markets... - Internet / Intranet / Extranet - Collaborative tools - Software suites 	<p><u>Internal</u></p> <p>He/she is in contact with marketing, sales and purchasing, and quality services staff.</p> <p><u>External</u></p> <p>He/she is in contact with customers, services providers, public services, chambers of commerce, and Government and/or local authorities at national or international level.</p>
<p><u>Expected results</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A good understanding of professional practices and social, economic and cultural environments of the target countries - Dissemination of useful information on relevant countries' business practices towards the staff concerned - An optimal use and adaptation of communication techniques depending on the person and situation - An adequate oral and written communication in national and in the required foreign language, respecting the codes and norms of the foreign country concerned - An available, up to date database and network of business contacts - Maintenance and enlargement of an optimal contacts' network and a trustworthy relationship. 		