

Getting electrical

Luyton Driman

I want to deal and ponder on a couple of subjects within the world of electrical products this month.

Anybody wanting to create a successful export department, whether they operate as a solo business, an SMME or as part of a large manufacturing operation, needs to be totally up to speed on all aspects of quality control (QC) and sample preparation.

Regarding things electrical, if you are planning to export to other countries in Africa or even further-a-field, it is crucial for you to know the voltage and plug types used in any of these countries.

I have seen examples, in one particular case, where a company dispatched products to Angola, they appropriated no QC; and the products were dispatched with the regular 16A plugs still attached to all the products. This is totally unacceptable and unprofessional.

In my book I go to great pains to explain why it is so important to know the market you are entering into. People take heed; a new customer will place you in his memory bank on an issue like this.

Basically, if you take Africa and divide it into quadrants, the south is predominantly 16A, the east

predominantly 13A square pin, and the west and north use mainly 2-pin Euro/Shuko plugs. Using this guide as a rule of thumb should help you to go about doing your deals with confidence! There is also a website available that will give you all the world voltage options (for every country), which is very handy indeed. I suggest you print it out and carry it with you.

Voltage mainly becomes a factor when you start entering into international markets. Take the Caribbean, where I was amazed to find some islands being 220 V, some 110 V, with a variation of plug types and cycle rates. In the case where you wish to enter into an international market with a locally designed and manufactured product, take note by abiding by the international law concerning electrical products for whatever country you are trying to sell to, ie you will need to have your products tested by a registered testing house to see if your products conform to its (country in question) region's standards, eg, "CE" classification for the European and UK markets, "UL" classification for the USA/Canada and there are specific tests needed for Australasia and some African countries as well.

Obviously an SABS and/or a CSIR classification, accreditation and certification is a good start from the South African context.



Luyton Driman, author of "Going the extra mile: A guide to trading in Africa" writes a monthly column for *Export SA*

The cost of sending non-tested products that do not meet any of these standards to pending customers or that do not work makes for a very expensive exercise.

Another example I witnessed was a local company which sent an electrical product to the Caribbean for evaluation and testing, but the product was not checked properly when it left the factory, there was no instruction manual and it simply did not work. Verdict: the company in question did not even get out of the starting blocks, as the prospective customer was too nervous to trust its production run and moved to a competitive product made in another country. ■



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