

ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING FIRM FINDS SUCCESS IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS

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Schloss Engineered Equipment, Inc. (SEE) counts Egypt, the Dominican Republic, Chile, Venezuela, Ireland, Barbados, Malaysia and Taiwan as some of its major export markets. Few of

these nations existed in its current political or economic form when Schloss Engineered Equipment was founded in 1898. This is a company with a very steady hand.

Over its 103-year history, through previous forms, Schloss Engineered Equipment has remained a family

owned and operated business with a continuing history of success in exporting environmental treatment equipment. It wasn't until the third generation took control, however — when Schloss Engineered Equipment of Aurora, Colorado, became the first female owned manufacturer in its industry under Kristy A. Schloss — that exports really skyrocketed.

Although Schloss Engineered Equipment began exporting in the 1960s, usually in partnership with larger companies, it wasn't until the 1990s when international sales to Taiwan began to fall, that SEE reached out to the Department of Commerce for help. Increasing international sales had another, more personal benefit as well, namely, satisfying the company goal of preserving the global environment while increasing the quality of life abroad, especially in the areas of health, tourism, and sustainable development. For this very reason, in fact, SEE handles only the design and manufacture of environmental equipment, leaving operation and service of the machines to the individual global localities.



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Many international companies in the environmental industry are based in Colorado. "There's a significant aware-

ness of the global economy in the region,” Schloss remarks, “We’ve always had a global perspective. It’s just become wider and more active as other countries have become more interested in the environment. There is a great deal of demand in this industry.” The numbers would seem to agree: since 1992, with help from the International Trade Administration and with an eye toward diversifying SEE’s market base, Schloss Engineered Equipment has seen a 900 percent increase in international exports. “When you’re located in so many different markets, the peaks and valleys aren’t as prominent [as in a single market]. We probably would not be as internationally successful as we have been without the international trade organizations,” Schloss notes, “They have been able to facilitate some important connections for us.”

HELP IN NAVIGATING THE EXPORTING PROCESS

One of the factors that make the Department of Commerce so useful, according to Schloss, is its ability to provide companies with information on market access, customs, culture, and logistics. The connections established through the Department of Commerce help SEE navigate a global marketplace where each individual nation is very specific with its own customs and regulations.

One such connection, secured with the help of the Commercial Service and the Colorado International Trade Office, resulted in Schloss Engineered Equipment’s participation in the design and construction of a massive water treatment facility in Dublin, Ireland. This story begins in April 1999, when the U.S. Export Assistance Center began helping identify companies to accompany Colorado’s Governor, Bill Owens, on a trade mission to the United Kingdom. Because of Ms. Schloss’ previous success on a trade mission with the Assistant Secretary of Commerce, SEE was invited to join the mission to further its ongoing technical and commercial

discussions with the consulting engineer of the Dublin water treatment project, at the time one of the largest infrastructure projects in the EU.

In meeting the European firm face to face as part of the trade mission, Schloss was able to negotiate a larger scope of work with the multinational team and was eventually successful in securing a significant contract. “As it turned out, the president of the consulting engineering firm knew us from previous work outside of Europe and realized that we were a known entity,” Schloss notes, “With the credibility of the trade mission we were able to negotiate an expanded role in the project.” “This is a huge project and we are excited to have a significant part,” continues Schloss, “Moreover, it’s encouraging as a taxpayer to see the state of Colorado, the Export Assistance Center, and various parts of the London embassy working so well to produce such a beneficial mission, that will no doubt lead to more European Union work.” And indeed it has, as SEE is currently negotiating a similar contract with the same multinational team for a project in England. Additionally, SEE has completed numerous other projects in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

SUCCESS AND RECOGNITION

The success Ms. Schloss achieved with the help of the Department of Commerce has not gone unnoticed. In 1999, the U.S. Small Business Administration’s Office of Advocacy named Ms. Schloss the Small Business Exporter of the Year for “her outstanding success in exporting and demonstrating encouragement of other small businesses to export.” Chief Counsel for Advocacy, Jere W. Glover, went on to remark on “the tremendous slate of candidates from throughout the United States for our annual award,” and congratulated Ms. Schloss on her accomplishment, thanking her “on behalf of America’s small exporters.”

Ms. Schloss had a very good year with the SBA. In March 2000, Schloss contacted Nancy Charles-Parker, director of the U.S. Export Assistance Center for the Rocky Mountain region, and notified her that SEE had secured its first sales of equipment to Canada. Previously unsuccessful in breaking into the Canadian market, Schloss attended a workshop, hosted by the SBA, on women exporting to Canada. As a result of the information Schloss received from the SBA, SEE found an Ontario based distributor who helped SEE win two contracts in that province.

“I am most proud of our efforts in building a sound environment in which businesses and communities can thrive,” Schloss says. “Trade and the environment are mutually beneficial in promoting economic growth and the well-being of people around the world.” ■