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## Export office helps smooth the way

**Whether it's shipping to Nigeria  
or just getting started, the Export  
Assistance Center has answers**

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By Lyn Danninger  
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When Will Hartzell, president of Manoa-based [Safe Water Systems LLC](#), wanted to ship a water pasteurizing device to a remote mission in Nigeria, he knew he would need help to get it there.

The remoteness of the location, an uncertain political situation there and a high likelihood of theft on arrival, all needed to be overcome if the device was to safely reach its destination, a remote Catholic-sponsored orphanage about 150 miles from Lagos, the country's main port and capital.

Likewise, when a Japan-based sportswear company first approached Clyde Kawahara about receiving regular shipments of T-shirts from his Sand Island-based company, **Pacific Creations**, Kawahara knew little about how to export goods to a foreign country.



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Will Hartzell, left, of Safe Water Systems, and Clyde Kawahara of Pacific Creations, have both been helped by the Export Assistance Center. The two were recognized yesterday for their exporting success.

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"In the very beginning, we didn't even know how to do a shippers export form," Kawahara said.

Both men found help at the Export Assistance Center, run by the U.S. Commercial Service, an arm of the federal Department of Commerce. The center's job is to assist U.S. businesses in exporting goods overseas. The local office is located at Foreign Trade Zone No. 9.

Center director Mike Murphy is a veteran of the U.S. Foreign Service. With contacts all over the world, it's Murphy and his staff who find answers -- from the routine to the obscure -- for people like Hartzell and Kawahara.

The service routinely works with about 350 mostly small companies at any time, Murphy said.

"What happens is a company wants to sell overseas but does not have the slightest idea where to start," he said.

Murphy's office can supply detailed information about the potential market, including a 200-page guide to each country that answers typical questions related to shipping, market

data, paperwork and tariffs.

"We walk them through step by step," he said.

The office also coordinates with the trade sections of various U.S. consulates and embassies overseas who can assist in specific areas, Murphy said.

"We hand them off to our folks overseas if they need support. It could be something simple. For example, if the company is not getting paid, a lot of times a telephone call will solve the problem or it could be looking for a potential overseas partner," he said.

For Hartzell, assistance with getting the water pasteurizer to its destination in Nigeria came when Murphy arranged for local contacts at the U.S. embassy to help out.

"They made sure it got from the port to the installation site, so they set things up with a local shipper and tracked it all the way. Had we not had that kind of assurance, I doubt it would have made it," Hartzell said.

For Kawahara, assistance came as help understanding everything from the basics of exporting to getting paid.

"Their role is to give guidance and direct you where to go," he said.

Pacific Creations now has 30 employees and through its Japanese customer has products going as far as Europe.

Both local companies were recognized by the Department of Commerce yesterday for their efforts and their successes.

Murphy said the department chose Safe Water Systems and Pacific Creations for recognition because of their sustained growth and success over the past couple of years.

But for Murphy, like a proud parent, the greatest satisfaction in his job comes when one of the companies he helps succeeds.

"It's really enjoyable helping a small company get a foothold somewhere because it means so much to them," he said.

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