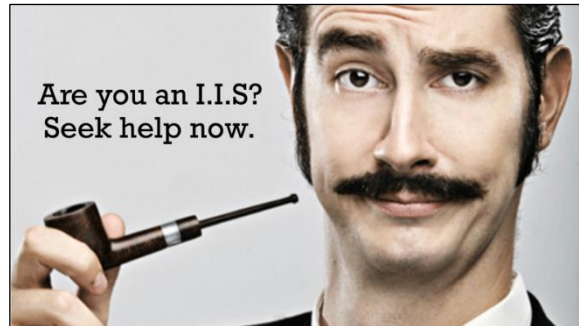


Are you an I.I.S.? Do you know an I.I.S? You can get help!

Last year at an exporting event, in a room of international trade advisors, I was shocked and offended by an I.I.S - an International Intellectual Snob. You know the type. He was in need of showin' off with a little TDS - Talking Down Syndrome mixed in, definitely an I.I.S. This wasn't my first, nor my last experience with this species of human, however it was my most memorable.



During an open group exchange, this young gentleman, obviously very skilled in international commerce, stood up and shared his experience with a potential exporter who had a successful small business and wanted to expand internationally. He chuckled as he recalled that this man "didn't even know what a Harmonized Tariff Schedule B number was, much less how to spell it." He said it with such an air of arrogance that my hair stood on end.

As we say in Gun Barrel City, I was "as mad as a hornet when their nest is jabbed." I wanted to stand up and shout, "the man you are snickering about probably makes more than everyone in this room!" but one numbskull remark didn't deserve another. And, if I had said anything, I would have stood alone. There were a number of people in the room that chuckled right along with him. I quietly sat there and realized to my horror that there are a lot of folks with I.I.S. syndrome in the export and import world.

And it's not just the snobs, it's the horror stories that are told over and over again that curl my toes...in a bad way. Anyone who has been to an export conference has heard from the podium, a chilling export horror story. It grabs everyone's attention in the room, but it seems to do more harm than good. Save the Halloween stories for, well, Halloween. Of course, there are exceptions. Exporting is business expansion. And as with any expansion, caution is advisable. But this should be informed caution and not Nightmare on Elm Street fear. And it should be supported by people that stand next to, rather than look down on, those they are trying to help.

As a lifelong entrepreneur, I feel that I can speak for other small-to-medium size enterprises, so let me be clear.... export horror stories do NOT motivate potential exporters and the arrogance of International Intellectual Snobs just piss us off.

So what is the cure for IIS Syndrome?

1. Don't be like that young man - all hat and no cattle, ever!
2. Know that the person who is the recipient of your advice probably keeps his success stories under his ten-gallon hat.
3. Paint a scenario of turning export hurdles into small speed bumps with the right tools.
4. Speak their language and encourage exporting for all the right reasons.

It's time to get excited about exportin'!

Yours truly,
#BettySueExportQueen

The Riddle of the Exporter™ - Export Training for Entrepreneurs by an Entrepreneur