

Welcome from Samantha Pileggi – Director of Commercial Operations, Institute of Export & International Trade



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This 'Doing Business with Oman Guide' looks at the second-largest state in the Arabian Peninsula and a market with significant ties to the UK. A founding member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the League of Arab States, Oman neighbours Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, making it a key transit point for the oil and gas industry. It is the oldest independent state in the Arab world and is also one of the more traditional countries in the Gulf region.

Its population of five million people contains a significant number of expatriates. With English largely spoken and with the country ranked 68th in the World Bank's 2020 'Doing Business' rankings, several UK businesses are already operating in Oman, including Shell, BP, BAE and Rolls Royce. Indeed, the UK has often been among Oman's largest investors. British standards are widely used in the country and there are thousands of UK expatriates living there.

Though the energy sector makes up around half of its GDP and almost three-quarters of its export earnings, recent diversification strategies from its government have opened opportunities for businesses from all sectors – particularly in infrastructure, healthcare and education. According to the ONS, the value of UK exports to Oman rocketed up to just under £1.5 billion in 2016 from around £750 million in 2015. The UK's strongest exports to Oman have typically been machinery, education and training, construction products, defence equipment and business services.

There are, of course, challenges to be overcome when selling into Oman – as there are with any market. If you're looking to set up a local operation, this can take time as you're required to get a government licence and to employ Omani nationals. When exporting to Oman, you should also be aware of the risk of payment delays – though this is something the Institute can help you with through our template international terms and conditions, which include payment terms.

As mentioned, Oman is one of the more traditional Gulf nations in terms of culture, so sensitivity and respect for Islamic beliefs and practices is a must. In terms of business culture, don't be put off if Omanis turn up late to your meetings as they are quite relaxed and flexible with their time, though they will expect their overseas visitors to be on time. Also bear in mind that, in Omani culture, the weekend takes place on Friday and Saturday.

Strong personal relationships are really important as Omani business people will tend to work with people they are familiar with and who they can trust. A degree of patience is therefore a must during the initial meetings and don't be afraid to open up a little bit – they will want to get to know you!

As ever, we at the Institute are more than happy to support you should you enter the Omani market through our training courses, qualifications, technical helpline and online resources.

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