

Conquering the UK

A first-time New Zealand exporter has managed to steal the show at Birmingham in the United Kingdom. Simon Fawkes has the story.

Wayne Manson, Managing Director of Multifit Hospital Supplies approached Business to Markets for assistance with preparing and exhibiting at this year's Naidex trade fair in Birmingham and NZTE co-funded through a Capability Development Grant.

Naidex is the number one national event in the UK for the homecare, disability and rehabilitation sectors. Nearly all the major companies servicing these sectors exhibit at Naidex and a large number of Community Occupational Therapists (OT's) visit the fair.

The level of interest over the three-day event was phenomenal and a distributor short-list was drawn up. A week after the fair, visits were paid to those on the list to discuss how each company could represent Multifit in the UK.

"I was not too sure quite what to expect, but the level of interest far exceeded my expectations", says Manson, who was faced with some tough decisions about which of the prospective distributors would be the best fit.

The result was a first order placed two months after the fair and prospects for sales to start rolling now that the CE mark has been obtained for this Class 1 medical device.

This was a dream run, but what helped make this such a success?

Having a proven product that meets an identified need is a good starting point. The Powered Leg Lifter was developed in response to requests from OT's who had problems with clients not being able to move their feet into bed independently. The OT's wanted a leg lifter that followed the natural action people normally use to get their feet into bed. The Multifit leg lifter does just



that - it lifts your feet and transports them towards the end of the bed.

Being very clear about what you want to achieve and making sure that this is realistic, is another necessity. Multifit had two objectives: to identify prospective distributors that were both suitable and interested in the leg lifter and to get feedback from Community OT's.

It is also important to thoroughly research your target market. In this case companies exhibiting at Naidex, who distributed products for moving and handling. This meant looking at short-listed distributors in some detail, with one of the evaluation factors being "what impact would the Multifit leg lifter have on their business?"

Ensure you approach at least your "A" list of prospects well before you leave New Zealand. This may stimulate their interest and even if some companies

do not respond, you are getting on their radar screens.

Take advantage of any assistance and opportunities offered by trade fair organisers. This worked especially well for Multifit, which was one of 11 finalists in the "Naidex New Product of the Year Award". It cost nothing to apply, and as a first-time exhibitor, Multifit was offered a special advertising package in the exhibitor manual, which is used as a buying guide during the year.

"Quite a few people said that they had only come to Naidex to see the Multifit leg lifter," says Wayne, "Being the only non-UK company to be a finalist helped to raise our profile."

Finally take every opportunity to get to know people at the fair, in particular those who have some standing in the industry. You can learn a lot about trends.

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