



Curaçao as an Export Hub for the Financial Sector

The Export of Services in Curaçao

A significant part of Curaçao's economy relies on the export of services. International financial services such as consulting, auditing, banking and the setup of international structures have played an important role in Curaçao's economy since the 1950's. Additionally, the number of entrepreneurs choosing Curaçao as their home base, while providing a range of services to international clients, continues to grow.

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The island's infrastructure is key to these services, with technology as an integral part of communication. Ensuring Curaçao remains innovative in this area will always benefit the local economy, especially businesses that rely on uninterrupted connections. Delivering services in a cost-effective and timely manner has become more than just essential; it is the foundation of doing business.

Exporting a service demands a special emphasis on human interaction, both locally and abroad. This is why a workforce with superior communication skills, diplomacy and especially, acute cultural awareness, is the single greatest asset for delivering a quality service export. Curaçao has been keen to protect, and further expand, its human

capital. The island's strategic location has, historically, been a significant advantage and has provided the population with a keen understanding of the countries and cultures surrounding the island, in addition to many languages spoken. With many reputable lawyers, accountants, notaries, and fiscal advisers, who are usually educated in Europe or North America living and working in Curaçao, the island has been able to establish itself as a type of back office for the rest of the Caribbean and a hub to Latin America.

Though the Netherlands is, and has been, the main trading partner of Curaçao due to its historical and constitutional ties, Curaçao is spreading its wings and connecting on a larger scale with other countries. "Spain, Eastern European countries like Romania and Turkey, as well as Colombia are increasingly seeking international structuring solutions using Curaçao's entities and financial services. The Far East is another area of interest. Though the common law jurisdictions of the Caribbean are currently preferred, there is a significant increase in the use of Curaçao's international

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financial services for this market", explained Julian Lopez Ramirez, Managing Partner at Deloitte Dutch Caribbean and interim Director General of Customs in Aruba.

Keys to Success When Going Abroad

With an increasing number of small and medium sized businesses in Curaçao now offering their expertise to an international market, it is important to note the keys to success when choosing to take your business abroad. Lopez Ramirez works with clients in a range

Julian Lopez Ramirez





of jurisdictions. He has an insider's view on the development of strategies, the structuring of international organizations and the success and failures of companies exporting their services. "Going abroad is an expensive and time consuming venture, and thus, there are a few key elements to take into account before you make that giant leap forward," remarked Lopez Ramirez. He points out three fundamental considerations when deciding to position your company to export products or services:

- Research is imperative. Know where are going and if your product or service is up to par for that market. Mediocrity is not good enough. You need to excel and be distinctive.
- Make sure you are filling a need and that your service is bringing value to your target market.
- Finding the right partner in your target country is vital. Your partner will know the local economic conditions, the culture within the sector for which you are aiming and should be able to put you in contact with key players in that industry.

Leading by Example

When asked what we can learn from other countries, Lopez Ramirez points out that "the great export giants each have a clear mission and vision with regards to their export of both products and services." The important thing is that each stakeholder, within the respective industries, knows

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the collective goal, what steps need to be taken to reach that goal, and that they can trust their co-stakeholders in the execution of the strategy. "In Curaçao, companies have a tendency to promote the island individually. Working together, both within specific industries and on a larger scale, can ensure we use our resources efficiently and reach a larger audience," said Lopez Ramirez. There is a great need for consensus on mission and vision when it comes to the export of services, both for the island and for the individual sectors within the scope of international services.

Public-Private Partnership

According to Lopez Ramirez, the formulation of the mission and vision should be initiated by the private sector and then the support of the government should be sought. “The private sector needs to set the course of action for the products and target markets on which it will focus its efforts. The government can then allocate its resources to assist with the successful implementation and completion of the plan,” described Lopez Ramirez. A well-balance public-private partnership is beneficial for both the outward facing policies of the island and the internal trust and communication mechanism. With regards to this, Curaçao must act as a pliable jurisdiction where the mission and vision are secure, even as the strategy adapts in response to international regulatory and economic fluctuations.

The cooperation between the public and the private sector will prove indispensable in the execution and success of Curaçao’s vision. Those “export giants” excel essentially because of their resilient public-private partnerships. This is something Curaçao can learn from and build upon. The collaboration between the members of the Curaçao International Financial

Center (CIFC) sets the tone for how the public and the private sector can come together on a broad scale and work on a common objective.

A Way Forward

The infrastructure, extensive knowledge base and the reliable regulatory environment in Curaçao have proven to be a good basis for small and medium sized enterprises (SME’s) as well as for large, international organizations. In the Caribbean and Latin America, Curaçao has been able to establish itself as an international financial service center. Expanding our reach and ensuring that Curaçao as a brand becomes more recognizable in other parts of the world is a logical next step. “Though Curaçao has much to offer, it is imperative that we identify where Curaçao can add the most value and focus specifically on those products and markets. This will ensure that, as a nation, we can go to the international market with a strong and unified alliance of what Curaçao is and what it has to offer”, added Lopez Ramirez. This is where a good public-private partnership can add significant value; formulate what is feasible and where the growth-opportunities lie.

