

Catching the Dragon Train

Making that first step into the China market is an intimidating step for most businesses. China is a powerhouse and its markets are evolving more rapidly than almost anywhere on earth. An aspiration to enter this complex and dynamic market requires courage and determination and a more than a little help from your China-based 'friends'.

Breaking into the China market successfully can seem like an almost impossible task to companies with limited or no experience of doing business there. "Exporters need a local presence to help them build their brand and market strategy," says Jussara Bierman of Shanghai-based branding agency Rare HQ. "We have seen too many businesses fall on their faces because they have trusted distributors, taken a one-size approach, or had a DIY attitude with any market research involving a flying visit or New Zealand-based desk research. China requires a discrete mind-set, commitment, and insight. This doesn't come about over-night. The best advice I can give is to acknowledge your limitations and invest in on-the-ground support."

Rare HQ set up in China in 2012 to assist businesses to commercialise their brand in the Chinese market, offering a range of services from initial market research, brand strategy and implementation, to social marketing.

"Social marketing provides the real opportunity in China. Social media fits well with China's community based society. A quarter of the world's social media users are in China, and the mobile revolution is sending this media to new heights," says Jussara. "However this space is already over-saturated and competitive, and multinationals have the marketing budgets of a small country - a perfect opportunity for us to think outside the box and show some kiwi ingenuity."

Social networking is currently the most effective channel of reach, engagement and connection in China, and increasingly the influential platform for decision-making. Establishing a presence on China's unique digital social ecosystem creates a valuable asset for listening and talking, and building a community of advocates.

"Social media is about relationships, and engaging on social media by creating a sustainable brand identity and experience is one of the best ways to foster B2B and B2C relationships in this socially connected country," explains Jussara. "Companies are starting to cotton on to the value of social marketing. It's not just about lead generation and brand awareness, we are increasingly being asked to grow opinion leaders and monitor conversation volume and sentiment to understand the opportunity."

To learn more contact Rare managing director Jussara Bierman, at jussara@rareHQ.com or view her recent video interview on www.rarehq.com

Rare HQ are offering kick starter packages and 'on the spot' advice for companies entering the dynamic Chinese market. To learn more contact Rare managing director Jussara Bierman, at jussara@rareHQ.com and register for her regular 'china insights' email updates on www.rarehq.com