



THE NEW FACES OF **AMERICAN TRADE**

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF INTERNET PLATFORMS AND CLOUD TECHNOLOGIES IN **THE GLOBAL SUCCESS OF SMALL BUSINESS**

Global  Innovation Forum

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ABOUT GIF

The Global Innovation Forum is a nonprofit effort to connect entrepreneur, small business, development, and university communities with policymakers and select corporations to explore the opportunities and challenges of engaging in the global marketplace. GIF serves as a hub for business, university and development communities around the world to communicate with officials and corporations, discover public and private resources to help them succeed, and improve the public policy landscape to enable global innovation. GIF is a project of the 501(c)(3) National Foreign Trade Council Foundation.

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KAMIN PERFORMANCE MINERALS

MINING | 350 EMPLOYEES | FOUNDED IN 2010

“Delivering value from the ground up” is the mission of KaMin Performance Minerals, explained CEO Rankin Hobbs.

KaMin is one of the leading global suppliers of high-quality kaolin clay. Since 1926, KaMin has been mining and producing the fine-particle, high-brightness clay in three different locations in Georgia: Macon, Sandersville and Wrens. The company also has operations in Brazil, managed by their subsidiary CADAM.

Kaolin clay is an essential component for manufacturing rubber, plastic, paint and paper, among other industrial applications. “Our customer base consists of major multinational corporations as well as small manufacturers all over the world,” noted Hobbs.

The company first engaged with international customers in 1969 and has since grown to become one of the largest U.S. exporters of kaolin clay. With customers in 65 countries, Europe and Asia are the most important markets for the company.

To help access the large potential customer base in China, the company has translated its website into Chinese.

“As our export market expanded over the years, our workforce has as well,” observed Hobbs. Today, over 350 employees fill the company’s three Georgia locations. KaMin’s business supports the

jobs of nearly 100 additional support services in the Georgia area. Hobbs described the important role that internet-enabled systems play in connecting KaMin staff, logistics partners, and customers and noted how important an open global internet is for his international business.

KaMin utilizes a web-based Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) platform to help execute its global business, which supports internal planning, manufacturing, and order cash processes. Hobbs noted how, “Our systems transfer information seamlessly to optimize efficiencies on export orders with our supply chain partners.”

Mobile platforms can simplify logistics for global small businesses. For example, bar code instruments can help with packaging and shipping procedures, shared Hobbs.

By immediately populating data into a centralized system for tracking, the company is able to eliminate manual processes and potential for error, not to mention save time.

Kaolin clay is found around the world, challenging the company

to convince customers to pay for the product and have it shipped thousands of miles from Georgia.

While social media does not play a large role in the business-facing kaolin clay industry, KaMin sets itself apart from competitors by sharing technical documentation and hosting webinars via their website.

The company also utilizes LinkedIn, Google+ and YouTube as avenues for customers worldwide to learn more about the kaolin clay and to connect with the KaMin team.

Finding the right partners helps small businesses prepare for and resolve issues that come from global business, advised Hobbs. "We learned a long time ago that selection of the right partners to represent us internationally is crucial," explained Hobbs. Those partners can help resolve issues that may arise on the ground.

Hobbs noted that the U.S. Commercial Service provides an array of affordable services to small businesses looking to succeed in global markets. Even small businesses that are not new to the exporting game, like KaMin, can benefit. The U.S. Commerce Department's Gold Key services "helped us to identify and select a new agent and distributor in Asia," while trade specialists at U.S. Export Assistance (USEAC) centers have helped with market research on specific activities and provided information on customs in different markets.

"An additional benefit of our relationship with the U.S. Commercial Service has been the introductions they have made for us to both State of Georgia and Small Business Administration resources," said Hobbs.

For entrepreneurs looking to go global, Hobbs shares three key pieces of advice: "Find good supply chain partners to help you, contact your local USEAC for advice, and take advantage of local programs and networking groups for mentorship, education and advice."



**MACON,
GEORGIA**

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SMEs account for 89% of Georgia goods exporters

KAOLIN CLAY IS USED IN MANUFACTURING A WIDE RANGE OF PRODUCTS, SUCH AS PAPER, PAINT, CRAYONS AND PLASTIC - TO NAME A FEW.

