



County businesses in tune with global markets

By [Tom Hintgen \(Contact\)](#) | [The Daily Journal](#)

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Businesses and industries know that right here in the United States is the best place to sell their products and services. More and more businesses, however, also know that a successful future lies with sales to places overseas.

This point was brought home Tuesday during a gathering of leaders from area communities at the West Central Initiative in Fergus Falls. One of the guest speakers was Heather Ranck, director of Fargo-based U.S. Commercial Service, a division of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Ranck works with counties in eastern North Dakota and western Minnesota, including Otter Tail County.

“Our office provides assistance to international markets for small to medium-sized companies,” she said. “We also provide assistance to businesses such as [ShoreMaster](#) of Fergus Falls.”

The Fergus Falls-based producer of waterfront equipment is taking part in the ExporTech program, designed by U.S. Commercial Service, to help companies enter or expand into global markets.

“To do this,” said Ranck, “we utilize a team of exporting resources and experts to help companies such as [ShoreMaster](#) to move quickly beyond just planning, into actual export sales.”

A success story in northwest Minnesota is Mattracks of Karlstad, Minn., northwest of Thief River Falls. After working with U.S. Commercial Service, the company that uses worldwide track technology to help get equipment into tough terrain has seen its employee count jump from five to 60.

Mattracks transforms most 4x4 vehicles into all-terrain vehicles equipped with rubber tracks that will go almost anywhere and bring those vehicles back. The manufacturer in Karlstad has over 40 track system models.

“The key to success is helping companies answer pre-market questions, with selection-type assistance,” said Ranck. “In Minnesota we’re fortunate to work with U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar who chairs export promotions for the commerce committee in Washington.”

New companies, she said, are becoming more and more active in global markets.

“Our strength at U.S. Commercial Service is our global network of offices,” she said. “We deal mostly with businesses outside the food industry. It’s better for those within the food industry sector to deal with resources through the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture).”

North Dakota and Minnesota companies that use U.S. Commercial Service has more than doubled since a trade specialist was stationed in Fargo in March 2005. The office helps companies resolve about 350 different trade matters a year.

“We’ve been directly involved in over 100 export transactions since March 2005,” said Ranck, “representing millions of dollars in new sales for companies in North Dakota and Minnesota.”

She said the most popular services include matchmaking between companies and overseas buyers, coordinating trade missions and running

background checks on overseas firms. The types of companies using the services include agricultural machinery manufacturers, aviation companies and educational institutions.

The U.S. Commercial Service office is located at 51 Broadway, Suite 505 in Fargo. Ranck can be reached by calling 701-239-5080. Her e-mail is heather.ranck@mail.doc.gov